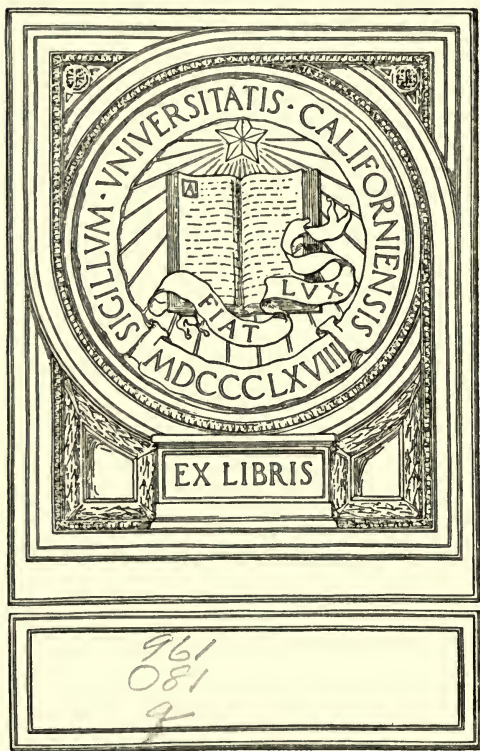




THE QUEEN VERSUS BILLY

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OYD OSBOURNE



The Queen ver-
sus Billy and
Other Stories



THE QUEEN VER- SUS BILLY AND OTHER STORIES

By LLOYD OSBOURNE

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THE QUEEN VERSUS BILLY





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IT was the *Sandfly*, Captain Toombs, that brought the news to Sydney and intercepted her Majesty's third-class cruiser *Stingaree*, as she lay in Man-of-War Cove, with her boats hoisted in and a deck-load of coal as high as her bulwarks, on the eve of a long trip into the western Pacific. It was the same old story—another white man sent to his last account in the inhospitable Solomons, where if the climate does not kill you the black man soon will: "Thomas Hysslop Biggar, commonly known as 'Captain Tom'; aged forty-six; British subject; occupation, trader in coprah; place of residence, Sunflower Bay, island of Guadalcanar; murdered by the natives in September, 1888, between the 7th and the 24th, and his station looted and burned." There was trouble in store for Sunflower Bay; they had killed Collins in 1884, and Casseroles the Frenchman in 1887, and had drawn upon themselves an ominous attention by firing into the *Meg Merrilies* in the course of the same year. Murder was becoming too frequent in Sunflower Bay, and Captain Casement, while policing those sweltering seas, was asked to "conduct an inquiry into the alleged murder of T. H. Biggar, and take what punitive measures he judged to be necessary."

It was not everybody who would have liked such a

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task; in dealing with savages the innocent are too often lumped with the guilty, and while you are scattering death and canister among the evil-doers, you are often mangling their wives and children in a way horrible to think of. Captain Casement had seen such things in the course of his eventful service, and though no stickler where his duty was concerned, he was neither a brute nor a coward. He was a simple gentleman of character, parts, and conscience, with refined tastes, and a horror of shedding innocent blood. Under his command were five officers: Facey, acting first lieutenant, Burder, acting second, Assistant Paymaster Pickthorn, Engineer Sennett, Dr. Roche, ten marines, and a crew of eighty-eight men.

After a roundabout cruise through the pleasant groups of Fiji, Tongataboo, and Samoa, with little to occupy him save official dinners, tennis parties, and an occasional dance ashore, Captain Casement headed his ship for the wild western islands and pricked out a course for Sunflower Bay. One hot morning, when the damp, moist air made everything sticky to the touch, and the whole ship sweated like a palm-house from stem to stern, the *Stingaree* ran past the towering cliffs and roaring breakers of Guadalcanar, and let go her anchor off the blow-hole in Sunflower Bay. It was a melancholy spot to look at, though beautiful in a gloomy and savage fashion, and the only signs of man's occupancy were the blackened ruin of the trader's house, a small mountain of coal half covered with creepers, and a flagstaff surmounted by a skull. There was no visible beach, for the mangroves ran to

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the water's edge, save where it had been partially cleared away by the man whose murder they had come to avenge; nor did the closest scrutiny with the glass betray any telltale smoke or the least sign of habitation. Captain Casement surveyed the place with his keen, practised eyes, and the longer he looked the less he liked it. The desolation jarred upon his nerves, and his heart fell a little as the blow-hole burst hoarsely under the ship's quarter, and the everlasting breakers on the outer reef droned their note of menace and alarm.

"Goodness gracious!" he said, in his abrupt, impatient fashion, as he stood beside Facey on the bridge and superintended the laying of the kedge. "I don't half like the look of it, Mr. Facey; it's a damned nasty-looking place."

The first lieutenant nodded. He was a burly, inarticulate man, to whom speech was always a serious matter.

"And see here, Facey," went on the captain. "Guns don't matter much; none of the devils shoot fit to speak of; but their poisoned arrows are the very deuce—you know that was the way Goodenough was killed—and you must keep your weather eye lifting."

"Am I to go, sir?" asked the lieutenant.

"Yes," said Casement. "You must take Pickthorn and twenty-five men in the first cutter. Send Burder in the second, with twenty more, to cover your landing. And for God's sake, Facey, keep cool, and neither get flustered nor over-friendly! Don't shoot unless you have to; and always remember they are the most

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treacherous savages in the world. Be gentle and firm, and do everything with as little fuss and as great a show of confidence as you can."

"All right, sir," said Facey.

Half an hour later, Facey, with twenty-five well-armed men, had vanished into the mangroves, while Burder and his crew lay forty yards off the shore in the second cutter, the officer devouring "Under Two Flags," and the men smoking and yarning in the bottom of the boat. On the *Stingaree* two light guns were cast loose and made ready to open fire at a moment's notice, and a lookout man was stationed in the maintop. The doctor busied himself in dismal preparation, while the captain paced the bridge with quick and anxious steps, fretting for the safety of his party ashore.

Hour after hour passed and brought never a sound from the melancholy woods. The fierce sun mounted to the zenith and sank again into the western sky. Casement was beside himself with suspense; a cup of tea served him for lunch, and he smoked one cigar after another. A deep foreboding brooded over the ship; the men sat or walked uneasily about the waist; the maintop was clustered with anxious blue-jackets; and old Quinn, the gunner, a half-crazy zealot whose religious convictions were of the extremest order, pattered off prayers beside the shotted guns. Towards five o'clock, when things were looking desperate and all began to fear the very worst, a sudden shout roused the ship, and the shore party, noisy and triumphant, were seen streaming down to the beach. A

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few moments later the two boats pulled slowly off to the ship, Facey's company the richer by a black man, whose costume consisted of little more than the ropes he was bound with. A thundering cheer hailed them as they swept under the stern and drew up at the starboard gangway, and Facey was soon reporting himself on the bridge.

"I can't tell you what a relief it is to see you," said the captain. "I would n't pass another such day for a thousand pounds!"

Facey was dog-tired, and his tattered clothes and scratched face gave evidence of a toilsome march. But he was in a boisterous good humour. He had acquitted himself with marked success, and was thankful to have brought back his party and himself safe and sound.

"Well, how did you make out?" asked the captain.

"We landed at the trader's house," began Facey, "followed a path that led inland, and reached some Kanaka huts. Not a soul in 'em; clean gone, every man jack. Followed along a well beaten path which led us into the next bay, bearing north-northeast half-east, keeping the liveliest lookout all the time. Three miles along we ran into another village, chock-a-block with niggers. It looked a nasty go; lots of guns and spears, and everybody pretty skittish, kind of they would and they would n't! I recollected your orders and went slow; you know what I mean, sir—worked off the presents, and smoked my pipe leisurely. By and by they came round, tricky as the devil, on to make friends or to eat us alive, whichever seemed the

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more promising. I let out what I wanted, and bit by bit found out that all the Sunflower Bay crowd were there, even to old Jibberik, the chief—him Toombs said was the biggest scoundrel of the lot. He looked pretty sick and knew mighty well what we were after. I talked broadsides to that old man, and put it to him that he had better give up the chaps who had killed the trader than waltz back to the ship and be shot instanter himself—for somebody had to go, I said; and just as soon as I got the old codger alongside of me I gave him to understand that he was my bird, and kept my cocked pistol pointed at his belly. After no end of a fuss, and lots of frothing and loud talk, with things looking precious ugly now and again, we ended by coming out on top. Then they dragged along a young nigger named Billy, a returned labour-boy from the Queensland plantations, they said, and handed him over to me as the murderer. I thought it was more than likely they 'd give us some cheap nigger they had no use for, or some worn-out old customer, as they did in Pentecost to Dewar of the *Royalist*; but I think this Billy was all right. A lot of niggers—Billy's own push, I suppose—looked as black as fits and would n't come round for a long time. Then I lashed the prisoner's hands and tied him to one of our men, and talked pretty straight to Jib. I made him promise he 'd bring his people back at once, and be down on the beach, himself and two others, to-morrow morning to give evidence against Billy."

"You 've done well, Mr. Facey," said Casement, as his lieutenant drew to a close, "and I tell you the

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story sha'n't lose when I report it to the admiral. You had better go now and get your clothes off," he added.

Facey jumped to his feet. "I am sure I am awfully obliged to you, sir," he said.

"Ugh, that 's all right," said Casement, in his testy way. "What have you done with the prisoner?"

"Turned him over to the sergeant for safe-keeping, sir," returned the officer.

"Leg-irons?" asked Casement.

"Leg-irons, handcuffs, and a dog-chain," returned Facey, with a grin. "He 's cost too much to take any chances of his getting off."

The first thing next morning, old Jibberik was brought aboard with his two companions. He was a disgusting old gorilla of a man, with a hairy chest and a cold, leering eye—a mere scarecrow of humanity, of a type incredibly cruel and debased. He had worked up enough courage overnight to beg for everything within sight, and he fingered the clothes and accoutrements of the seamen like a greedy child. His two friends were not a whit behind him, either in manners or appearance. They clicked and chattered like monkeys, and showed extraordinary fearlessness in that armed ship amid the swarming whites; the only man they seemed to dread was old Jibberik himself; and they wilted under his piercing glance like flowers in the sun, whenever his baleful attention fell their way.

Four bells was the time set for the court martial; at nine o'clock Casement sent for Facey and told him he must prepare to defend the prisoner.

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"Burder will prosecute for the Queen," he said. "Pickthorn will act as clerk. Sennett, Roche, and I will compose the court."

The first lieutenant was overcome. "I don't think I can, sir," he said feebly. "I never did such a thing in my life; I would n't know where to begin, or to leave off, for that matter."

"You can leave off when we hang your prisoner," Casement returned, with his bull-doggish air. "Of course, it's all a damned farce," he went on. "Somebody's got to act for the nigger; it's printed that way in the book."

"I 'll move for an adjournment," said Facey.

"I 'll be hanged if you will," said the captain. "It's a beastly business, and we have got to put it through."

Facey groaned.

"Well, do you think I like it?" said Casement.

The lieutenant saluted and walked away to find his prisoner.

Billy was clanking his chains in a canvas hutch alongside the sick-bay, where a man lay dying. He looked up as Facey approached, and his face brightened as he recognised his captor. He was a good-looking young negro, and the symmetry of his limbs, and his air of intelligence and capacity, stood out in pleasant contrast with the rest of his comrades in Sunflower Bay.

"Billy," said Facey, "they are going to make judge and jury for you by and by; and I am to talky-talky for you."

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"All same Queensland," returned Billy. "May the Lord have mercy on your sinful soul!"

Facey was stupefied. "Where in thunder did you learn that?" he demanded.

"Oh, me savvy too much," said Billy.

"Now, see here," said the lieutenant. "You did n't kill that trader?"

"Yes, I kill him," said Billy, cheerfully.

"You did?" cried the other.

"White fellow no good; I kill him," said the prisoner.

"If you tell that to the captain he 'll shoot you," said Facey. If the prisoner was to be defended he was going to give him all the help he could.

The black boy looked distressed and nodded a forlorn assent.

"You 'll be a big fool to say that," said Facey.

"White fellow no good; I kill him," repeated Billy.

"You unmitigated idiot, you 'll do for yourself," cried the lieutenant, angrily. "What 's the good of my talking for you if you can't stand up for yourself?"

Billy began to whimper; the other's loud voice and threatening demeanour seemed to overwhelm him.

Facey was struck with contrition. "Now shut up that snivelling," he said, more kindly. "Tell me the truth, Bill. Is n't this some humbuggery of old Jib's—a regular plant, to shield somebody else at the cost of your hide?"

Billy rolled his eyes, and wiped away the tears with a grimy paw.

"White fellow no good; I kill—"

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"You be damned!" cried his legal adviser.

At ten o'clock the court martial was assembled on the quarter-deck. The captain, with his brawny shoulders thrown forward, and his hands deep in his trouser pockets, had all the air of a man in the throes of indigestion. On either side of him were Sennett and Roche; and in front, beside a table covered with a flag, was Pickthorn, with a clerkly outfit and a Bible. Billy stood in chains beside a couple of marines, looking extremely depressed. The old gorillas, their filthy kilts bulging with what they had begged or pilfered, were in charge of the sergeant, who had all he could do to prevent their spitting on the deck.

Facey was the first one sworn. He deposed as to the capture and identity of the prisoner. Then Billy was led up to the table and told to plead.

"Kiss the book and say whether you murdered the trader or not," said the captain.

"White fellow no good; I kill him," quavered the prisoner.

"Pleads guilty," said Casement to the clerk.

"What did you do it for?" demanded the court.

Billy reiterated his stock phrase.

"Take him away," said the captain.

Jibberik was the next witness. He kissed the book as though it were his long-lost brother, and looked almost unabashed enough to beg it of Pickthorn. I shall not weary the reader with his laboured English, that *lingua Franca* of the isles which in the Western Pacific is known as *Beach da Mar*. He told a pretty plain story: Billy and the trader had always been on

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bad terms. One night, crazy with palm-toddy, Billy had sneaked down to Captain Tom's house and shot him through the body as he was reading a book at supper. As to the subsequent burning and looting of the station the old savage was none so clear, sheltering himself in the unintelligibility of which he was a master. His two companions followed suit, and drew the noose a little tighter round Billy's throat.

Then rose Burder for the Queen. He was a cheeky youngster, with pink cheeks, a glib tongue, and no end of assurance.

"I don't propose to waste the time of the honourable court," he began; "but if ever there was a flat-footed, self-confessed murderer, I would say it is the dusky gentleman in the dock. The blood of Biggar cries aloud for vengeance, and it would be a shame if it cried in vain," he said. He would point to that dreary ruin of which the defunct had been the manly ornament, radiating civilisation round him like a candle in the dark, and then to that black monster, who had felled him down. This kind of thing had got to stop in the Solomon Islands; the natives were losing all respect for whites, and he put it to the court whether they would not jeopardise the life of the new trader if they acquitted the murderer of the old. Now that they had got their hand in, he would go even further, and hang up with Billy the three witnesses for the prosecution, old Jib and the other brace of jossers, who had villain and cutthroat stamped—

"Stick to the prisoner," cried the court.

"I bow to correction, sir," went on Burder. "I say

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again, this is no time for half-measures; and I say that Sunflower Bay will be a better place to live in without Mr. Billy. I leave it to the honourable court, with every confidence, to vindicate justice in these islands by condemning the prisoner to the extreme penalty of the law. The case for the Queen is closed, gentlemen."

"I believe you appear for the defence, Mr. Facey?" said Casement, as the Queen's prosecutor took his seat.

"I do, sir," returned the first lieutenant, nervously.

"I should like to say, first of all," he began, "that I will not cross-examine these dirty old savages who have given evidence against my client. I quite agree with everything my honourable friend has said regarding them, and I cannot think that the court will attach undue importance to any evidence they may have given. We've been told that the Kanakas are losing all respect for whites, and that if we don't take some strong measures there will be the deuce to pay in these islands. Perhaps there will be; but is that the British justice we're so proud of, or is it fair play, gentlemen, to the unfortunate wretch who is trembling before you? From what I've seen of the whites in this group, I can say emphatically that I'm in a line with the Kanakas. Now, as to this Billy: What is there against him but his own confession? and that, I beg leave to point out, ought not to be taken as conclusive. As like as not he is the scapegoat for the whole bay, and has been coached up to tell this story under the screw. Just look one moment at old Jib there, and

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see how his friends wither when his eyes fall their way. For all we know to the contrary, his gibberish and click-click may be to the tune of 'Billy, you son of a gun, I'll cut you into forty pieces, or flay you alive if you don't stick to what I've told you.' After all, what have we learned from Billy? Nothing more than this: 'White fellow no good; I kill him.' Is that what anybody would call a full confession? Does it give any clew or any details as to the motive or the carrying out of this murder? It may be, indeed, that Billy is a monomaniac with a confirmed delusion that he has killed Biggar; the court may smile, but I think I am right in stating that such things have occurred and have even led to miscarriages of justice in the past. I tell you, gentlemen, I believe it was the whole blooming bay that killed Biggar, and that Billy was just as guilty or just as innocent as the rest. And there is one thing I feel mortal sure about: that if we take the prisoner outside the heads we will soon get the gag off his mouth, and learn a good deal more about this ugly business. Under old Jib's search-light he's got to keep a close lip; but take him out to sea, and I answer for it he won't be so reticent. In conclusion, gentlemen, I say again that the evidence in this case is inconclusive; that the honourable gentleman who has appeared for the Queen has failed to make out a convincing case against my client; that Billy's confession in itself is not a sufficient proof that he committed the crime charged against him; and that we cannot take the life of a human being on such flimsy and unsupported evidence."

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A dead silence fell upon the court when Facey drew his case to a close and resumed his seat. Nothing could be heard but the scratching of Pickthorn's pen and the reverberating growl of the blow-hole as it fretted and fumed within for the screaming blast which was soon to follow. Casement rammed his hands deeper into his pockets, gnawed his tawny mustache, and protruded his chin. At last, with a start, he awoke from his reverie, and barked out:

"Mr. Sennett, as the youngest member, it is for you to speak first."

"I think he 's guilty, sir," said Sennett.

Casement turned his quick glance on Roche.

"Same here," said the doctor.

"The finding of the court," said the captain after another pause, "is that the prisoner Billy is guilty of the murder of T. H.—what's his name?—Biggar, at Sunflower Bay, on the blank day of September, 1888, and is condemned to be shot as an example to the island. Sentence to be deferred until I get the ship back from New Ireland, where I've to look into that Carbutt business and the outrage at MacCarthy's Inlet, on the chance of the prisoner making a further confession and implicating others in his crime. The court is dismissed."

"Beg pardon, sir," said Pickthorn, looking up from his writing as the others rose to their feet. "What am I to call the case?—the Queen *versus* Billy what?"

"Billy nothing," said the captain, savagely. "Call him William Pickthorn if you think it sounds better."

The verdict of the court was explained to Jibberik,

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and the old rogue and his pair of friends were landed in the cove, the boat returning to find the ship with anchor weighed and the loosened sails flapping on the yards. In a few minutes she was steaming out to sea, and every one grew confident that Billy's tongue would soon wag as he saw Sunflower Bay dwindle behind him. But the dogged savage stuck to his tale; he had but one reply to all inquiries, to all probing and pumping for further particulars of the murder. On his side the conversation began and ended with: "White fellow no good; I kill him." On other topics he could be drawn out at will, and proved himself a most tractable, sweet-tempered, and far from unintelligent fellow. The men got to like him immensely, keeping him in perpetual tobacco and providing him with more grog than was quite good for him. In the fo'castle it was rank heresy to call him a murderer or to express any doubts regarding his innocence. He became at once the pet and the mystery of the ship, and his canvas cell the rallying-point for all the little gaieties on board. He played cards well, was an apt pupil on the accordion, and at checkers he was the master of the ship! And he not only beat you, but he beat you handsomely, shaking hands before and after the event, like a prize-fighter in the ring.

Casement felt very uneasy about the boy; he grew more and more uncomfortable at heart, and it was the talk of the ship that the problem of Billy was weighing on the "old man" like a hundredweight of bricks. The whole business preyed upon him unceas-

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ingly and he dreaded each passing day that brought the execution ever nearer. Billy kept him sleepless in the steaming nights; Billy faced him like a spectre at his solitary board; Billy's face blurred the pages of the books and magazines he had laid up for these dreary days in the Solomons. Casement visited his prisoner twice a day, against the better judgment that bade him keep away and try to forget him. He never said much after his first two ineffectual attempts to wrestle with Billy's stereotyped phrase and to extort further information; but, chewing a cigar, he would stare the black creature out of countenance for ten minutes at a time, with a look of the strongest annoyance and disfavor, as though his patience could not much longer withstand the strain.

The officers were not a whit behind their captain. Billy's artless ways and boundless good humour had won the whole ward-room to his side; and his grim determination to die, at once bewildered and exasperated every soul on board. The strange spectacle offered of a hundred men at work to persuade their prisoner to recall his damning confession, and on pins and needles to save him from a fate he himself seemed not to fear. The captain as good as told Facey that if the boy would assert his innocence he would scarcely venture to shoot him; and this intelligence Facey handed on to his client, and, incidentally, to the whole ship's company. Never was a criminal so beset. Every man on board tried in his turn to shake Billy's obstinacy, and to paint, in no uncertain colours, the dreadful fate the future held in store for him.

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One and all they retired discomfited, some with curses, others on the verge of tears. They swore at him for a fool; they cajoled him as they would a child; they acted out his last end with all fidelity to detail, even to a firing platoon saying "Bang, bang!" in dreadful unison, while a couple of seamen made Billy roll the deck in agony. The black boy would shudder and wipe his frightened eyes; but his fortitude was unshaken.

"White fellow no good; I kill him."

Then old Quinn got after him—wild-eyed, tangle-haired old Quinn, the gunner, who was half cracked on religion. He prayed and blubbered beside the wretched boy, overwhelming him with red-hot appeals and perfervid oratory. Billy became an instant convert, and got to love old Quinn as a dog his master. There was no more card-playing in Billy's cell, no more rum or tobacco; even checkers fell under the iron ban of old Quinn, to whom every enjoyment was hateful. Billy learned hymns instead, and would beguile the weary sentry on the watch with his tune-ful rendering of "Go Bury thy Sorrow," or "Nearer, my God, to Thee." He was possessed, too, of a Bible that Quinn gave him, from which the old gunner would read, in his strident, overbearing voice, the sweet gospel of charity and good will. But if old Quinn accomplished much, he ran, as they all ran at last, into that stone wall of words which Billy raised against the world. Contrition for the murder which had doomed him to die was what Billy would not show or profess in any way to feel. Rant though

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old Quinn might, and beseech on bended knees, with his eyes burning and his great frame shaking with agitation, he could extort from his convert no other answer than the one which all knew so well. Billy's eyes would snap and his mouth harden.

“White fellow no good; I kill him.”

As the days passed, and the ship made her way from bay to bay, from island to island, in the course of her policing cruise among those lawless whites and more than savage blacks, the captain grew desperate with the problem of Billy. They all said that Casement looked ten years older, and that something would soon happen to the “old man” if Billy did not soon skip out; and the “old man” showed all the desire in the world to bring about so desirable a consummation. Billy was accorded every liberty; his chains had long been things of the past, and no sentinel now guarded him in his cell or watched him periodically in his sleep. Billy was free to go where he would; and it was the fervent hope of all that he would lose no time in making his way ashore. But though Casement stopped at half a hundred villages, and laid the ship as close ashore as he dared risk her, still, for the life of him, Billy would not budge. Then they thought him afraid of sharks, which are plentiful in those seas, and kept the dinghy at the gangway, in defiance of every regulation, in the hope that the prisoner would deign to use it. But Billy showed no more desire to quit the ship than Casement himself, or old Quinn. He did the honours of the man-of-war to visiting chiefs, and seemed to be proud of his assured posi-

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tion on board. Go ashore? Escape? Not for worlds!

Then the captain determined upon new measures. He passed a hint to Facey, and Facey passed it to the mess, and the mess to the blue-jackets, that they were making things too comfortable for their prisoner. For a while Billy's easy life came to an abrupt conclusion. His best friends began to kick and cuff him without mercy. He was rope's-ended by the bo'sun's mate, and the cook threw boiling water over his naked skin. The boy's heart almost broke at this, and he went about dejected and unhappy for the first time since he had come aboard. But no harsh usage, no foul words, could drive him to desert the ship. He stuck to it like a barnacle, for all the captain spun out the cruise to an unconscionable length and stopped at all sorts of places that offered a favorable landing for the prisoner. But if Billy grew sad and moody under the stress of whippings and bad words, it was as nothing to the change in Casement himself, who turned daily greyer and more haggard as he pricked a course back to Sunflower Bay. Of course, he maintained a decent reserve all along, and betrayed, in words at least, not a sign of his consuming anxiety to rid himself of Billy. But at last even his iron front broke down. It was on the bridge, to Facey, when the ship had just dropped anchor in Port McGuire, not forty miles from Sunflower Bay.

"Mr. Facey," he said, "send Mr. Burder ashore with an armed party; tell him just to show himself a bit and come off again."

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"Yes, sir," said Facey.

"I am thinking they might take that fellow Billy to translate for them," he went on, shamefacedly.

The first lieutenant turned to go.

"Hold on," said the captain, suddenly lowering his voice and drawing his subordinate close to him.

"Just you pass it on to Burder that I would n't skin him alive—you know what I mean—if—well, suppose that black fellow cut his lucky altogether—"

Facey smiled.

"Of course," rasped out the captain, "I can't tolerate any dereliction of duty; but if the young devil made a break for it—"

"Ay, ay, sir," returned the first lieutenant, and darted down the brass steps three at a time. He called Burder aside and gave his instructions to that discreet youngster, who was sharp to see the point without the need for awkward explanations. A broad grin ran round the boat when Billy was made to descend and take his place beside Burder in the stern; and so palpable and open was the whole business that some aboard even shook the negro by the hand and bade him God-speed.

A couple of hours later Burder embarked again and headed for the ship in a tearing hurry. A chuckle ran along the decks as not a sign of Billy could be made out, and the nearing boat soon put the last doubt at rest. There was no black boy among the blue-jackets.

Burder skipped up the steps and saluted the captain on the bridge.

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"I have to report the escape of Billy, sir," he said, with inimitable gravity and assurance. "I scarcely know how it came to happen, sir, but he managed to bolt as he was walking between Miller and Cracroft."

"This is a very serious matter," said the captain, with ill-concealed cheerfulness. "I don't know but what it is my duty to reprimand you very severely for your carelessness. However, if he's gone, he's gone, I suppose. I hope you took measures to recapture him?"

"Yes, sir," returned Burder. "Looked for him high and low, sir."

"Poor Billy!" said the captain, with a smile that spoke volumes. "We'll say no more about it, Mr. Burder; it may be all for the best; but remember, sir, it must n't happen again."

"No, sir," said Burder.

"How did you manage it, old man?" was the eager question that met the youngster as he took shelter in the ward-room and ordered "a beer." All his messmates were round him, save Facey, who was officer of the deck and could not do more than hang in the doorway.

"I tell you it was n't easy," said the boy. "We promenaded all round the place, and I tried like fun to shake him off. I sent him errands and hid behind trees, and talked of how we were going to shoot him to-morrow—but it was all no blooming good! I was at my wits' end at last, and had almost made up my mind to tie him to a tree and run for it, when I got a bright idea. I pretended I had dropped my canteen under

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a banyan a mile behind the town, a kind of cemetery banyan, full of dead men's bones—a rummy place, I can tell you. And when we got down near the boat, I took the nigger on one side and bade him go and fetch it. 'And don't you come back without it, Billy,' said I. 'I'll be dismissed the service if I can't account for that canteen!' Then he asked how long I was going to stay, and I said a week; and he went off like a lamb, while we squared away for the ship. Did n't you see the jossers pull!"

It had been the merest pretence that had taken the war-ship into Port McGuire, and now that her merciful errand had been so successfully accomplished, and Billy reluctantly torn at last from those who had to kill him, Captain Casement lost no time in ordering the ship to sea. But as the winch tugged at the anchor, and the great hull crept up inch by inch to the tautened chain, a sudden yell roused the captain on the bridge and struck him as cruelly as one of those poisoned arrows he feared so much.

"Billy, on the starboard bow!"

Sure enough, a black poll protruded above the rippling bosom of the bay, and two frantic arms were seen driving a familiar dark countenance on a course towards the vessel. It was Billy indeed, his honest face marked with anguish and despair as he fought his way to regain his prison.

Casement groaned. And for this he had been holding the cruiser two long weeks in those God-forsaken islands, and had invented one excuse upon another to delay his return to Sunflower Bay! Billy

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had been given a hundred chances to escape, and now, like a bad penny, here he was again, ready to precipitate the catastrophe which could no longer be postponed.

A great laugh went up when Billy presented himself on deck, exhausted, dripping like a spaniel, and sorely hurt in spirit. He began at once to blurt out the story of the canteen, and made a bee-line for Burder; but that intrepid youngster could afford to listen to no explanations, and in self-defence had to order Billy into the hands of the marines, who led him away protesting.

Casement's patience was now quite at an end. He headed the ship for Sunflower Bay, and spared no coal to bring her there in short order. Three hours after they had passed out of the heads of Port McGuire the *Stingaree* was at anchor off the blow-hole.

Facey was drinking a whisky-and-soda, and preparing himself, as best he could, for the ordeal he knew to be before him, when the captain's servant entered the ward-room and requested his presence in the cabin.

"Mr. Facey," said the captain, "take the doctor and the pay and forty men well armed from the ship, and when you've assembled the village take that Billy and shoot him."

"Yes, sir," said the lieutenant, turning very pale.

"Faugh," rasped Casement, "it makes me sick. Damn the boy, why could n't he cut? Well, be off with you, and kill him as decently as you know how."

Billy did not at first realize how seriously he was

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involved in the plans of the shore party that was making ready. He dropped into one of the boats light-heartedly enough, and took his place cheerfully between two marines with loaded rifles. But the mournful hush of all about him, the eyes that turned and would not meet his own, the tenderness and sorrow which was expressed in every movement, in every furtive look, of his whilom comrades, all stirred and shook him with consternation. No one laughed at his little antics. He tickled the man next him, and nudged him, his friend Tommy, who could whistle like a blackbird and do amazing tricks with cards; but instead of an answering grin, Tommy's eyes filled with tears and he stared straight in front of him. Billy was whimpering before they were half ashore, and some understanding of the fate in store for him began to struggle through his thick head.

There was no need to assemble the village. It was there to meet them, old Jibberik and all, silent, funereal, and expectant. The men were marched up to the charred remains of the trader's house and formed up on three sides of a square, leaving the fourth open to the sea. To this space Billy was led by Facey and old Quinn, the gunner. The negro looked about him like a frightened child and clung to the old man.

"Will you give the prisoner a minute to make his peace with God?" asked old Quinn.

Facey nodded.

Quinn plunged down on his knees, Billy beside him. For a brief space the gunner pattered prayers thick and fast, like a man with no time to lose.

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"Billy," he said at last, "as you stand on the brink of that river we all must cross, as the few seconds run out that you have still to live and breathe and make your final and everlasting peace with the God you have so grievously offended, let me implore you to show some sorrow, some contrition, for the awful act that has brought you to this! Billy, tell God you are sorry that you killed Biggar."

For a moment Billy made no answer. At last, in a husky voice, he said:

"You mean Cap'n Tom, who live here before?"

"Him you hurled into eternity with all his sins hot on him. Yes, Captain Tom, the trader."

"No!" cried Billy, with a strangled cry. "Me no sorry. White fellow no good; I kill him."

"Quinn," cried Facey, "your time's up." The first lieutenant's face was livid, and his hands trembled as he bound Billy's eyes with a silk handkerchief.

"Stand right there, Billy," said the officer, turning the prisoner round to face the firing party, that was already drawn up.

"Good-bye, Missy Facey and gennelmen all," whimpered the boy.

"Good-bye, Billy," returned the other. "Now, men," he added, as he ran his eye along the faltering faces, "no damned squeamishness; if you want to help the nigger, you 'll shoot straight. For God's sake don't mangle him.

"Fire!"



THE BEAUTIFUL MAN OF
PINGALAP

THE BEAUTIFUL MAN OF PINGALAP

HE stood five feet nothing in his naked feet, a muscular, sandy little fellow, with a shock of red hair, a pair of watery blue eyes, and a tawny, sun-burned beard, the colour of fried carrots. I could not see myself that he was beautiful, and might have lived a year with him and never found it out; though he assured me, with a giggle of something like embarrassment, that he was no less a person than the Beautiful Man of Pingalap. Such at least was his name amongst the natives, who had admired him so persistently, and talked of him so much, that even the whites had come to call him by that familiar appellation.

"You see," he said, in that whining accent which no combination of letters can adequately render, "it tykes a man of a ruddy complexion to please them there Kanakas; and if he gains their respeck and 'as a w'y with him sort of jolly and careless-like, there 's nothing on their blooming island he earn't have for the arsking."

I gathered, however, as I talked with him in the shadow of the old boat-house in which we lived together at Ruk like a pair of tramps, that he, Henery Hinton, had not presumed to ask for much in those

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isles from which he had so recently emerged. Indeed, except for a camphor-wood chest, a nondescript valise of decayed leather, a monkey, a parrot, and a young native lady named Bo, my friend owned no more in the world than the window-curtain pyjamas in which he stood.

"It ain't much, is it," he said, with a sigh, "to show for eight long years on the Line? Sixty dollars and w'at you see before you! Though the monkey may be worth a trifle, and a w'aler captain once offered me a mee-lodian for the bird."

"And the girl?" I asked.

"Who 'd tyke her?" he replied, with a drop of his lip. "Did you ever see an uglier piece in all your life?"

"What do you mean to do with her?" I asked, knowing that the firm had promised him a passage to Sydney in the *Ransom*, and wondering what would become of the unfortunate Bo, whom he was little likely to drag with him to the colonies.

"You don't think I'm going to desert that girl," he said truculently, giving me a look of deep suspicion. "My word!" he went on, "after having taught her to byke bread and sew, and regularly broke her in to all kinds of work, it ain't likely I am going to leave her to be snapped up by the first feller that comes along. The man as gets her will find himself in clover, and might lie in bed all day and never turn his hand to nothink, as I've done myself time and time again at Pingalap, while she 'd make breakfast and tend the store. It would tyke several years to bring a new

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girl up to her mark, and then maybe she might n't have it in her, after all,—not all of them has,—and so your pains and lickings would be wasted."

"Lickings!" I said. "Is that the way you taught Bo?"

"I 'd like to know any other w'y," he said. "My word! a man has to master a woman, and there 's no getting around it. With some you can do it with love and kindness, but the most need just the whip and plenty of it. That little Bo, w'y, I 've held her down and lashed her till my arm was sore, and there ain't a part of me she has n't bit one time and another! Do you see that purple streak on my ear? I thought I was booked for hydrophobiar that morning, for it swelled up awful, and I was that weak with loss of blood that when I laid her head open with a fancy trade lamp I just keeled over in a dead faint. But there was never no nasty malice in Bo, and if we had a turn up now and then, she always played to the rules, and never bit a feller when he was down; and she never hurt me but what she 'd cry her eyes out afterwards and sometimes even arsk me to whip her for her wickedness. My word! I 'd lay it on to her then, for I could use both hands and had nothing to be afryde of. Of course that was long ago, when she was raw and only half trained like. I don't recollect having laid my hand to her since the *Belle Brandon* went ashore on Fourteen Island Group."

Having gone so deeply into the history of her subjugation, the Beautiful Man could not resist showing me a proof of Bo's dearly bought docility, and whistled

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to her to come to him. This she did readily enough, her ugly face wrinkling into smiles at sight of him. She was a wizened little creature, with an expression midway between that of a monkey and a Japanese image. Of all things in the world, Bo's chief pleasure was in clothes, of which she possessed an inordinate quantity, and it was her custom to make at least three toilets a day. She wore tight-fitting jackets plastered with beadwork like an Indian's, with embroidered skirts of bright cotton, and she incessantly occupied herself in adding to her stock. Half the day her little claws were busy with needle and beads, covering fresh bodices with barbarous patterns, while the monkey played about her and pilfered her things, and the parrot screamed whole sentences in the Pingalap language.

My own business in the Islands was of a purely scientific description, a learned society having equipped me for two years, with instructions to study the anthropological character of the natives, dip into the botany of Micronesia, and do what I could in its little-known zoölogy. I had meant to go directly to Yap, but in the uncertainties of South Sea travelling I had been landed for a spell on the island of Ruk, from which place I had hope of picking up another vessel before the month was out. Here I had run across the Beautiful Man, himself a bird of passage, waiting for the barque *Ransom*; and when I learned that Johnson, the firm's manager, had meant to charge me two dollars and a half a day for the privilege of messing at his table and seeing him get drunk every night, I was glad to chum in with Hinton

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and share the tumble-down boat-house in which he camped. Here we lived together, the Beautiful Man, Bo, and myself, in a simplicity that would have shamed the Garden of Eden. We slept at night on the musty sails of some forgotten ship, and in the daytime Bo prepared our meals over a driftwood fire. She baked the most excellent bread, and made her own yeast from fermented rice and sugar, which used to blow up periodically, with an explosion like that of a cannon. She also made admirable coffee, and a sort of sugar candy in the frying-pan, as well as griddle-cakes and waffles with the gulls' eggs we used to gather for ourselves. More than this she did not know, except how to open the can of beef or salmon which was the inevitable accompaniment of all our meals.

We rose at no stated hour in the morning, the sun being our only clock, and, as we read it, a very uncertain one. Hinton and I bathed in the lagoon, where he taught me daily how to dive with the greatest good humour and zeal, roaring with laughter at my failures, and applauding my successes to the skies. He often spoke to me in Pingalap, forgetting for the moment his own mother-tongue, and would wear a hang-dog expression for an hour afterwards, as though in some way he had disgraced himself. On our return to the boat-house we would find breakfast awaiting us, Bo guarding it with a switch from the depredations of the monkey and the parrot. After breakfast, when the Beautiful Man and I would lie against the wall and smoke our pipes, the little savage would wash her dishes, and putting them away in an empty gin-case,

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would next turn her attention to the pets, cleaning and brushing them with scrupulous care. Then, for another hour, we would see no more of her, while she retired behind a sail to effect fresh combinations of costume, reappearing at last with her hair nicely combed, and her breast dazzling like a robin's. There was to me something touching in the sight of this little person doing the round of a treadmill she had invented for herself, and spending the bright days in stringing her unending beads. It seemed a shame that she should be abandoned, so forlorn, solitary, and friendless, on the alien shore of Ruk; and the matter weighed on me so much that it often disturbed my dreams and gave rise to an anxiety that I was half ashamed to feel. Several times I spoke to the Beautiful Man on the subject, drawing a little on my imagination in depicting the wretchedness and degradation to which he was meaning to leave poor Bo, who could not fail, circumstanced as she was, to come to a miserable end. He always took my lecture in good part; for, in fairness to the Beautiful Man, I must confess he was the most good-natured creature alive, and used invariably to reply that he would not think of doing such a thing were it not for the pressing needs of his health, which, he assured me with solemnity, was in a bad way. I never could learn the exact nature of his malady, nor persuade him into any recital of his symptoms beyond a vague reference to what he called constitutional decay. Of course, I knew well enough that this was a mere cloak to excuse his conduct to Bo, whom I could see

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he meant to desert in the most heartless fashion, if in the meantime he failed to sell her to some passing trader. This he was always trying to do, on the sly, for he had enough decency left to screen the business from my view and carry on the negotiations with as much secrecy as he could manage. But the prospective buyer invariably cried off when he was shown the article for sale, however much it was bedizened with beads and shined up with oil, and the matter usually ended in a big drunk at the station, from which the Beautiful Man was more than once dragged insensible by his helpmeet. He even hinted to me that, owing to our long and intimate relations, I might myself become Bo's proprietor for a merely nominal sum; and when I told him straight out that I had come to the Islands to study, and not to entangle myself in any disreputable connection with a native woman, he begged my pardon very earnestly, and said that he wished to God he had been as well guided. But he always had a bargaining look in his eye when I praised Bo's bread, which indeed was our greatest luxury, or happened to pass my plate for another of her waffles.

"You're going to miss them things up there," he would say. "My word, ain't you going to miss them!"

This remark, incessantly repeated, made such an impression on me that I persuaded Bo to give me some lessons in bread-making, and even extorted from her, for a pound of beads paid in advance, the secret of her dynamitic yeast; so that I, too, started a bomb-

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shell of my own, and was half-way through a sack of flour before it finally dawned upon me that here was an art that I was incapable of learning. Bread I could certainly make, of a peculiarly stony character, but the trouble (as Hinton said) was the digesting of it afterwards. Nor was I more successful with my waffles, which glued themselves with obstinacy to the iron, like oysters on a rocky bottom, requiring to be detached in shreds by the aid of a knife. My efforts convulsed the Beautiful Man, and were the means of leading him, through his own vainglory and boastfulness, to perpetrate a basaltic lump of his own, the sight of which doubled Bo up with laughter, and caused her to burst out in giggles for a day afterwards. These attempts, of course, only enhanced her own prowess as a cook, and Hinton was never tired of expatiating on the lightness of her loaves and the melting quality of her cakes and waffles, with a glitter in his eye that I knew well how to interpret.

One day my long-overdue ship appeared in sight, and, beating her tedious way up the lagoon, dropped her anchor off the settlement. Captain Mins gave me six hours to get aboard, and promised me, over an introductory glass of square-face in the cabin, a speedy and prosperous run to the westward. My packing was a matter of no difficulty, for I had lived from day to day in the expectancy of a sudden call to start; besides, in a country where pyjamas are the rule and even socks are regarded as something of a superfluity, life reduces itself to first principles and baggage disappears. In half an hour I was ready to shift my

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things to the ship, only dallying a little longer to say farewell to my friends and take one final glance at the old boat-house. My heart misgave me when I looked, as I thought for the last time, at poor Bo in the midst of her pets, threading beads with the same tireless industry; while the Beautiful Man, at the farther end of the shed, was trying to sell her to a new-comer off the barque, an evil-looking customer they called Billy Jones's Cousin.

Prompted (I have since supposed) by the devil, I called the little man to where I stood and asked him peremptorily to name his lowest price for Bo. He replied in a brisk, businesslike manner that he could n't dream of letting her go for less than a hundred dollars.

"A hundred fiddlesticks!" I exclaimed. "Rather than see her abandoned here to starve, I will take her for my servant and pay her ten dollars a month."

"Oh, she don't need no money," he said. "Just you hug and kiss her a bit, and keep her going with beads and such-like, and she 'll work her hands off to serve you. It 's a mug's game to give a Kanaka money. W'y, they ain't no more fit for money than that monkey to navigate a ship."

"See here, Hinton," I said, "I have told you before that I did not come up here to start a native establishment—least of all with a woman who looks like Bo. But I 'm ready to take her off your hands and pay her good wages, and I don't think you can be so contemptible as to stand in her light."

"Oh, I shan't stand in her blooming light," he said.

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"I'd sleep easier to think I had left her in a comfortable home with a perfect gentleman such as you to take care of her. My word, I would, and the thought of it will be a comfort to me in the privations of my humble lot; and I trust you will believe me that it was in no over-reaching spirit that I ventured to nymy my finger for the girl. But I put it to you, as between man and man, won't you spare me a few dollars as a sort of token of your good will?"

"I'll give you twenty-five dollars for her," I said, "and not one penny more."

"My word," he said, "you're getting her cruel cheap!"

"Well, that's my price," I said.

"Perhaps you would n't care to give her a half a year's wages in advance?" he inquired. "A little money in her hand might hearten her up for the parting."

"Hearten you up, you mean," I said.

"I never was no haggler," he said. "She's yours, Mr. Logan, at twenty-five dollars."

"You go and talk to her a bit," I said, "and try to explain things to her, for I tell you I won't take her at all if she is unwilling."

It cut me to the heart to watch the poor girl's face as the Beautiful Man unfolded the plans for her future, and to see the way she looked at me with increasing distress and horror. When she began to cry, I could stand the sight no longer, and hurriedly left the place, feeling myself a thorough-paced scoundrel for my pains. It was only shame that took me back at last,

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after spending one of the most uncomfortable hours of my life on the beach outside the shed. I found her sitting on her chest, which apparently had been packed in hot haste by the Beautiful Man himself. With the parrot in her lap and the monkey shivering beside her, Bo presented the most woebegone picture. I don't know whether he had used the strap to her, or whether he had trusted, with apparent success, to the torrents of Pingalap idiom which was still pouring from his lips; but whatever the means he had used, the desired result, at least, had been achieved; for the little creature had been reduced to a stony docility, and, except for an occasional snuffle and an indescribable choking in her throat, she made no sign of rebellion when the Beautiful Man proposed that we should lose no further time in taking her aboard the ship. Between us we lifted the camphor-wood chest and set out together for the pier, Bo bringing up the rear with the monkey and the parrot and a roll of sleeping-mats. If ever I felt a fool and a brute, it was on this melancholy march to the lagoon, and I tingled to the soles of my feet with a sense of my humiliation. My only comfort, besides the support of an agitated conscience, was the intense plainness of my prisoner, whose face, I assured myself, betrayed the singleness and honesty of my intentions.

We put the chest in the corner of the trade-room, and made a little nest for Bo among the mats she had brought with her; and leaving her to tidy up the monkey with my hair-brush, the Beautiful Man and I retreated to the cabin to conclude the terms of our

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contract. To my surprise, he handed me a sheet of paper, made out in all appearance like any bill for merchandise, and asked me, with the most brazen assurance, to kindly settle it at my convenience. This was what I read :

W. J. Logan, Dr., to Henery Hinton :

1 Young Woman, cut price	\$25.00
1 Superior Congo Monkey	7.50
1 Choice Imported Parrot	4.50
1 Chest Fancy Female Wearing Apparel	40.00
7 Extra-size Special Kingsmill Mats . .	5.00
5 lbs. Best Assorted Beads	2.50
Total	<hr/> \$84.50

I burst out into a roar of laughter, and without any waste of words I told the Beautiful Man that he might carry the lady ashore again and peddle her to some bigger fool than I, for I was clean sick of him and her and the whole business, and though I still felt bound to give the twenty-five dollars I had originally promised, he might go and whistle for one cent more. Then, boiling over at the thought of his greed and heartlessness, I let out at him without restraint, he trying to stem the tide with "Oh, I s'y !" and "My word, Mr. Logan, sir !" until at last I had to pause for mere lack of breath and expletives. He took this opportunity to enter into a prolonged explanation, quavering for my pardon at every second word, while he expatiated on the value of that monkey and the parrot's really phenomenal knowledge of the Pingalap language. He

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was willing, seeing that I took the matter in such a w'y, to pass over the girl's duds (about which there might be some question) and even give w'y about the mats, w'ich, as Gord saw him, had cost eight dollars, Chile money, as he could prove by Captain Coffin of the *Cape Horn Pigeon*, now w'aling in the Arctic Seas; but as to the parrot and the monkey, he appealed to me, as between man and man, to settle for them out of hand, as they were truly and absolutely his own, and could not be expected to be lumped in with the price of the girl. I grew so sick of the fellow and his whining importunity that I counted out thirty-seven dollars from my bag, and told him to take or leave them and give me a clean receipt. This he did with the greatest good humour, having the audacity to shake my hand at parting, and make a little speech wishing me all manner of prosperity and success.

I noticed, however, that he did not return to the trade-room, but sneaked off the ship without seeing Bo again, and kept well out of sight on shore until the actual moment of our sailing. When I went in to pay a sort of duty call on my prisoner, I found her huddled up on the mats and to all appearance fast asleep; and I was not a little disappointed to find that she had not escaped in the bustle of our departure. Now that I was her master in good earnest and irrevocably bound to her for better or worse, I became a prey to the most dismal misgivings, and cursed the ill-judged benevolence that had led me into such a mess. And as for bread, the very sight of it was enough to plunge me into gloom, and when we sat down that day

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to lunch I asked the steward, as a favour, to allow me seamen's biscuit in its stead.

Every few hours I carried food to Bo and tried to make her sit up and eat; but, except for a little water, she permitted nothing to pass her lips, but lay limp and apathetic on the square of matting. The monkey and parrot showed more appetite, and gobbled up whole platefuls of soup and stew and preserved fruit, which at first I left on the floor in the hope that their mistress might be the less shy when my back was turned. Finally I decided to remove the pets altogether, for they were intolerably dirty in their habits, and I could not but think that Bo would be better off without a frowsy parrot roosting in her hair and a monkey biting her in play, especially as she was in the throes of a deathly seasickness and powerless to protect herself. Getting the parrot on deck was a comparatively simple matter, though he squawked a good deal and talked loudly in the Pingalap language. At last I stowed him safely away in a chicken-coop, where I was glad to see him well trounced by some enormous fowls with feathered trousers down their legs. But the monkey was not so lightly ravished from his mistress. He was as strong as a man and extraordinarily vicious; in ten steps I got ten bites, and came on deck with my pyjamas in blood and rags, he screeching like a thousand devils and clawing the air with fury. For the promise of a dollar I managed to unload him on old Louey, one of the sailors of the ship, who volunteered to make a muzzle for the brute, and tie him up until it was ready. But as I was still

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panting with my exertions, and cursing the foolishness that had ever led me into such a scrape, I heard from behind me a kind of heartbroken wail, and turned to see Bo emerging from the trade-room door. I am ashamed to say I trembled at the sight of her, for I recalled in a flash what the Beautiful Man had said of her temper when aroused, and I thought I should die of mortification were she to attack me now. But, fortunately, such was not her intention, though her face was overcast with reproach and indignation as she unsteadily stepped past me to the coop, where, with a cry, she threw open the door and clasped the parrot in her arms. Even as she did so, the trousered fowls themselves determined to make a break for liberty, and finding the barrier removed, they tumbled out in short order; and the ship happening at that moment to dip to leeward, two of them sailed unhesitatingly overboard and dropped in the white water astern. Subsequently I had the pleasure of paying Captain Mins five dollars for the pair. Bo next started for the monkey, which she took from old Louey's unresisting hands, and almost cried over it as she unbound the line that held him. Having thus rescued both her pets, she retreated dizzily to the shelter of the trade-room, where I found her, half an hour later, lying in agony on the floor.

We were three days running down to Yap, and arrived there late one afternoon just at the fall of dusk. On going ashore, I had the good fortune to secure a little house which happened to be lying vacant through the death of its last tenant; who, on

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the principle, I suppose, of letting the tree lie where it falls, had been buried within six feet of my front verandah. The following morning I moved my things into my new quarters, Bo following me obediently ashore in the ship's boat, seated on the top of her chest. I soon got the trade-room into shape for my work, unpacking my note-books, my little library, my collector guns, my photographic and other apparatus, as well as my big compound microscope with which I meant to perform scientific wonders in a part of the world so remote and so little known. Busy in these preparations, I managed to forget my slave and enjoy a few hours' unalloyed pleasure. I was brought back to earth, however, by the sound of her sobbing in the next room, where I rushed in to find her weeping on her mats, with her face turned to the wall. I made what shift I could to comfort her, talking to her as I might to a frightened dog, though she paid no more attention to me than she did to the parrot, who had raised its voice in an unending scream. At last, in despair, and at my wits' end to know what else to do, I put ten dollars in her little claw, and tried to tell her that it was her first month's wages in advance. This form of consolation, if altogether ineffective in the case of Bo herself, came in capitally to cheer the monkey, whom I heard slinging the money out of the window, a dollar at a time, to the great gratification of a crowd of natives outside.

All that day and all the following night Bo lay supinely on the mats, and hardly deigned to touch

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more than a few morsels of the food I prepared and brought her. The next morning, finding her still of the same mind, I unpacked my flour and other stores, and ordered her, in a rough voice, to get up and make bread. This she did, in a benumbed sort of fashion, dripping tears into the dough and snuffling every time I looked her way. The bread was all right when it was done, though it stuck in my throat when I reflected on the price I had paid to get it, and wondered how I was going to endure two long years of Bo's society. After a few weeks of this sort of housekeeping I began almost to wish that I were dead, and the sight of the creature became so intolerable to me that I hated to spend an unnecessary hour within my own house. Instead of improving in health, or spirits, or in any other way, Bo grew daily thinner and more woebegone and started a hacking cough, which, she communicated, in some mysterious manner, to the monkey, so that when one was still the other was in paroxysms, giving me, between them, scarce a moment of peace or sleep. Of course I doctored them both from my medicine-chest, and got the thanks I might reasonably have expected: bites and lacerations from the monkey, and from Bo that expression of hers that seemed to say, "Good God! what are you going to do to me now?" I found it too great a strain to persevere with the bread-making, and soon gave up all thought of turning her to any kind of practical account; for what with her tears, her cough, and her passive resistance to doing anything at all, save to titivate the monkey with my comb and brush and wash him with

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my sponge, I would rather have lived on squid and cocoanuts than anything of her making. Besides, she really seemed to be threatened with galloping consumption; for in addition to her cough, which grew constantly worse, she had other symptoms which alarmed me. Among my stores were a dozen tins of some mushy invalid food,—“Imperial something,” it was called,—with which I manufactured daily messes for my patient, of the consistency (and flavour) of white paint. If she at least failed to thrive on this, it was otherwise with the monkey and the parrot, who fought over her prostrate body for the stuff, and the former would snatch the cup from his mistress’s very mouth.

I think I could have borne up better under my misfortunes had I not suffered so much from loneliness in that far-off place; for, with the exception of half a dozen sottish traders, and a missionary and his wife named Small, there was not another white on the island to keep me company. The Smalls lived in snug missionary comfort at the other end of the bay, with half a dozen converts to do their work and attend to a nestful of young Smalls; and though they had parted, as it seemed to me, with all the principles of Christianity, they still retained enough religious prejudice to receive me (when I once ventured to make a formal call on them) with the most undisguised rudeness and hostility. Small gave me to understand that I was a sort of moral monster who, with gold and for my own wicked purpose, had parted a wife from her husband. It appeared, ac-

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according to Mr. Small, that I had blasted two fair young lives, as well as condemned my own soul to everlasting perdition ; and he promised the active interference of the next man-of-war. On my attempting to make my position in the matter a little clearer, the reverend gentleman began to take such an offensive tone that it was all I could do to leave his house without giving freer vent to my indignation than words alone sufficed. Indeed, I was angry enough to have kicked him down his own missionary steps, and made him in good earnest the ill-used martyr he pretended to be in his reports home.

With the traders I fared even worse, for the discreditable reports about me had become so well established that I was exposed by them to constant jokes and innuendoes, as well as to a friendliness that was more distasteful than the missionary's pronounced ill will. It was spread about the beach, and carried thence, I suppose, to every corner of the group, that Bo was a half-white of exquisite beauty, for whose possession I had paid her husband a sum to stagger the imagination, and that, unable to repel my loathsome embraces, she was now taking refuge in a premature death.

I doubt whether there was in the wide Pacific a man so depressed, so absolutely crushed and miserable, as I was during the course of those terrible days on Yap. Had it not been for the shame of the thing, I believe I would have sailed away on the first ship that offered, whatever the port to which she was bound, and would have quitted my unhappy prisoner at any

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hazard. But, to do me justice, I was incapable of treating any woman so badly, particularly such a sick and helpless creature as Bo was fast becoming. I had now begun, besides, to suspect another name for her complaint, and to see before me a situation more ambiguous and mortifying than any of which I had dreamed. My household was threatened with the advent of another member!

The idea of Bo and I both leaving together never struck my mind until the opportune arrival of the *Fleur de Lys*, bound for Ruk, suddenly turned my thoughts in a new direction. With feverish haste I calculated the course of the *Ransom*, the barque in which the Beautiful Man had been promised his passage to Sydney, and it seemed that with any kind of luck I might manage to intercept her in the *Fleur de Lys* by a good three days. Of course I knew a sailing-ship was ill to count upon, and that a favourable slant might bring her in a week before me or delay her for an indefinite time beyond the date of my arrival; but the chance seemed too good a one to be thrown away, and I lost no time in making my arrangements with Captain Brice of the schooner. When I explained the matter to Bo with signs that she could not misunderstand, she became instantly galvanised into a new creature, and ate a two-pound tin of beef on the strength of the good news.

I never grudged a penny of what it cost me to leave Yap, though I was stuck for three months' rent by the cormorant who said he owned my house, besides having to pay an extortionate sum to Captain Brice

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for our joint passage. But what was mere money in comparison to the liberty I saw before me—that life of blissful independence in which there should be no Bo, no dark shadow across my lonely hearth, no sleepless nights and apprehensive days, no monkey, no parrot! I trod the deck of the *Fleur de Lys* with a light step, and I think Bo and I began to understand each other for the first time. For once she even smiled at me, and insisted on my accepting a beadwork necktie she had embroidered for the monkey. If there was a worm in the bud, a perpetual and benumbing sense of uneasiness that never left me, it was the thought that the Beautiful Man might have slipped away before us; and I never looked over our foaming bows but I wondered whether the *Ransom* was not as briskly ploughing her way to Sydney, leaving me to face an unspeakable disaster on the shores of Ruk. But it was impossible to be long despondent in that pleasant air, with our little vessel heeling over to the trades and the water gurgling musically beneath our keel. Indeed, I felt my heart grow lighter with every stroke of the bell, with every twist of the patent log; and each day, when our position was pricked out on the chart, I felt a sense of fresh elation as the crosses grew towards Ruk. Nor was Bo a whit behind me in her cheerfulness, for she, too, livened up in the most wonderful manner, playing checkers with the captain, exercising her pets on the open deck, and romping for an hour at a stretch with the kanaka cabin-boy.

By the time we had raised the white beaches of our

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port, the whole ship's company, from the captain to the cook, were in the secret of our race, and as eager as I was myself to forestall the *Ransom* in the lagoon. When we entered the passage and opened out the head-station beyond, there was a regular cheer at the sight of our quest at anchor; for it was by so narrow a margin that I had cut off the Beautiful Man's retreat, and intercepted the vessel that was to carry him away. Coming up under the *Ransom*, we made a mooring off her quarter; and among the faces that lined up to stare at us from her decks, I had the satisfaction of recognising the frizzled red beard of our departing friend. On perceiving us, he waved his hand in the jauntiest manner, and replied to Bo's screams of affection by some words in Pingalap which effectually shut up that little person. She was still crying when we bundled her into the boat, bag and baggage, monkey, parrot, and camphor-wood chest; and pulling over to the barque, we deposited her, with all her possessions, on the disordered quarter-deck of the *Ransom*. The Beautiful Man sauntered up to us with an affectation of airy indifference, and languidly taking the pipe from his mouth, he had the effrontery to ask me if I, too, were bound for Sydney.

Resisting my first impulse to kick him, I controlled myself sufficiently to say that I was *not* going to Sydney—telling him at the same time that I washed my hands of Bo, whom I had now the satisfaction of returning to him.

"My word!" he said, "you don't think I'm going to tyke her?"

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"That 's your affair," said I, moving off.

"Oh, I s'y!" he cried in consternation, attempting, as he spoke, to lay a detaining hand on my sleeve. But I jerked it off, and stopping suddenly in my walk towards the gangway, I gave him such a look that he turned pale and shrank back from me.

"Oh, I s'y!" he faltered, and allowed me to descend in quiet to my boat.

Most of that afternoon I spent in the schooner's cabin, covertly watching Bo from a port-hole. For hours she remained where I had left her on the quarter-deck, seated imperturbably on her chest, the monkey and parrot on either hand. As for the Beautiful Man, he, like myself, had also disappeared from view, and was doubtless watching the situation from some secure hiding-hole of his own. Bo was again and again accosted by the officers of the ship, who alternately cajoled and threatened her in their fruitless attempts to get her off the vessel. But nothing was achieved until five o'clock, when the captain came off from the station, and, in an off-with-his-head style, commanded the presence of the Beautiful Man. I was too far off, of course, to hear one word that passed between them, but the pantomime needed no explanation, as Hinton cringed and the captain fumed, while Bo looked on like a graven image in a joss-house. In the end Bo was removed bodily from the ship to the shore, and landed, with her things, on the beach, where, until night fell and closed round her, I could see her still roosting on her box. Seriously alarmed, I began to experience the most disquieting

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fears for the result, especially as I could perceive the Beautiful Man lounging serenely about the barque's deck, smoking a cigar and spitting light-heartedly over her side. It made me more than uneasy to see him afloat and her ashore; and the barque's loosened sail lying ready to open to the breeze warned me there was little time to lose. It was some relief to my mind to learn from Captain Brice that the barque was not due to sail before the morrow noon; but even this short respite served to quicken my apprehension when I reflected on my utter powerlessness to interfere. I passed a restless night, revolving a thousand plans to hinder the Beautiful Man's departure, and rose at dawn in a state of desperation.

The first thing I saw, on going to the galley for my morning cup of coffee, was poor Bo planted on the beach, where, as far as I could see, she must have passed the night, sitting with unshaken determination on her camphor-wood chest. Taking the schooner's dinghy, I pulled myself over to the *Ransom*, bent on a fresh scheme to retrieve the situation. The first person I ran across on board was the Beautiful Man himself, who hailed me with the greatest good humour, and asked what the devil had brought me there so early.

"To put you off this ship," I replied. "When the captain has heard my story, I don't think you will ever see Sydney, Mr. Beautiful Man."

"W'y, w'at 's this you have against me?" he asked, with a very creditable show of astonishment.

I pointed to the melancholy spectre on the beach.

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"W'at of it?" he said. "She ain't mine: she 's yours."

"You wait till I see the captain!" I retorted.

"A fat lot he 'll care," said Hinton. "The fack is, as between man and man, I don't mind telling you he 'd shake me if he dared, the old hunks; but I 've got an order for my passage from the owner, and it will be worth his job for him to disregard it. My word! I thought he was going to bounce me last night, for he was tearing up and down here like a royal Bengal tiger in a cage of blue fire, giving me w'at he called a piece of his mind. A dirty low mind it was, too, and I don't mind who hears me say it. But I stood on my order. I said, 'Here it is,' I said, 'and I beg to inform you that I'm going to syle in this ship to Sydney. Put me ashore if you dare,' I said."

At this moment the captain came on deck. He gave a stiff nod in reply to my salutation, and marched past the Beautiful Man without so much as a look.

"That 's a nice sight, sir," I said, pointing in the direction of Bo.

He gave a snort and muttered something below his breath.

"Is his order good?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," he replied; "his order is good."

"See here, Hinton," I said, "would n't you care to sell it?"

"W'y, w'at are you driving at?" he returned.

"If you 'll take her back," I said, indicating Bo in the distance, "I 'll buy your passage for what it 's worth."

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"I don't know as I'd care to sell," he returned; "leastw'ys, at any figger you 'd care to nyme."

"What would you care to nyme?" I repeated after him, in involuntary mimicry of his whine.

"One hundred dollars," he replied.

"And for one hundred dollars you will surrender your passage and go back to the girl," I demanded, "and swear never to leave her again, unless it is on her own island and among her own relations?"

"Oh, come off!" he exclaimed. "Ain't you blooming well deserting her yourself?"

"If you are not careful I will punch your head," I said.

"Don't mind me, sir," said the captain, significantly, turning an enormous back upon us.

"Is it business you 're talking, or fight?" inquired the Beautiful Man. "You sort of mix a feller up."

"I tell you I'll pay you one hundred dollars on those terms," I said.

"Hand them along, then," said Hinton. "Ityke you."

Unbuckling the money-belt I wore round my waist, I called upon the captain to witness the proceedings, and counted out one hundred dollars in gold. Without a word the Beautiful Man resigned his order into my hands and tied up the money in the corner of a dirty handkerchief, looking at me the while with something almost like compunction.

"Would you mind accepting this red pearl?" he said, producing a trumpery pill of a thing that was worth perhaps a dollar. "You might value it for old syke's syke."

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I was rather disarmed by this gift and took it with a smile, putting in another good word for Bo.

"Might I ask what you are going to do now?" asked the captain, addressing Hinton in a tone that bordered on ferocity.

"W'y, I was just thinking of st'ying to breakfast, sir," quavered the little man, "and then toddle ashore to my happy home."

"Get off my ship!" roared the captain. "Get off my ship, you red-headed beach-comber and pirate. Get off before you are kicked off!"

Hinton bolted like a rabbit for the rail, and almost before we could realise what he was about, we saw him leap feet foremost into the lagoon. Blowing and cursing, he rose to the surface, and informed the captain he should hold him personally responsible for his bag, which, it seems, had been left in one of the cabins below.

"Your bag!" cried the captain, going to the open skylight and thundering out: "Steward, bring up that beach-comber's bag!"

The boy came running up with the valise I remembered so well; it looked even more dilapidated than before, for the thing was patched with canvas in a dozen places, and was wound round and round with a kind of cocoanut string. The captain lifted it in his brawny arms, and aiming it at the Beautiful Man's head, let it fly straight at him. It just missed Hinton by an inch, and splashed water all over him as he grasped it to his breast. Turning on his back and dragging the spongy thing along with him, as one

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might the body of a drowning person, he set off most unconcernedly for the shore. In this fashion we saw him strike the beach, and rise up at last with the bag in his hand, not a dozen paces from where Bo was still encamped. We were, unfortunately, at too great a distance to watch their faces or to observe narrowly the greeting that must have passed between them; but the meeting was to all appearance not unfriendly, and I had the satisfaction of seeing them move off together in the direction of the boat-house, lugging the chest and bag between them, as though they were about to resume housekeeping in the old place.

I spent the rest of the morning writing letters to go by the *Ransom*, which sailed away at noon, homeward bound. I had no heart to go ashore again that day, for the Bo affair stuck in my throat, and the loss of so much money, not to speak of time, made me feel seriously crippled in the plans I had laid out for my future work. I was undecided, besides, whether to remain at Ruk and wait for another ship to the westward, or to stand by the schooner in her cruise through the Kingsmills, remaining over, perhaps, at Butaritari, or at one of the islands towards the south. On talking over the matter with the captain, I found his feelings so far changed towards me that he was eager now to give me a passage at any price; for, as he told me, he had taken a genuine liking to my company, and was desirous of having another face at his lonely table. Accordingly we patched up the matter to our mutual satisfaction, and arranged to sail the next day when the tide turned at ten.

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Shortly before this hour, I remembered some improvised tide-gauges I had set on the weather side of the island, and I snatched an opportunity to see them on the very eve, as it was, of the schooner's sailing. It seemed, however, that I had been too late in going, for not one of them could I find, though I searched up and down the beach for as long a time as I dared to stay.

I was returning leisurely back across the island, when a turn of the path brought me face to face with the Beautiful Man himself, carrying some kind of fish-trap in his hand. I would have walked silently past him, for the very sight of the creature now turned my stomach, had he not, in what proved an evil moment for himself, detained me as I was passing.

"My word!" he said, "that girl is regularly gone on you, she is! W'y, last night, when I told her of the hundred dollars, she was that put out that I heard the teeth snap in her head like that, and I thought she was going to do for me sure, while I lit out in the dark and looked for a club. She's put by a little present for you before you go,—one of them pearl-shell bonito-hooks, and a string of the last monkey's teeth,—and she asked me to say she hoped you would n't forget her."

"I won't forget her," I answered pretty quietly. "Nor you either, you little cur."

"Cur!" he repeated, edging away from me.

I don't know what possessed me, but the memory of my wrongs, of my wasted money, of my lost time, of the man's egregious cynicism and selfishness, sud-

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denly set my long-tried temper flaming ; and almost before I knew what I was doing, I had the creature by the throat and was pounding him with all my force against a tree. I was twice his size and twice his strength, but I fought him regardless of all the deficiencies of personal combat, in a lawless and primeval manner, even as one of our hairy ancestors might have revenged himself (after extraordinary provocation) upon another. I shook him, I kicked him, I pulled out whole handfuls of frowsy red hair and whisker ; and when at last he lay limp before me in the dirt, whimpering aloud for mercy, I beat him for ten minutes with a cocoanut branch that happened, by the best of fortunes, to be at hand. When I at length desisted, it was from no sense of pity for him, but rather in concern for myself and my interrupted voyage. I did turn him over once or twice to assure myself that none of his bones were broken, and that my punishment had not gone too far ; and as I did so, he executed some hollow groans, and went through with an admirable stage-play of impending dissolution. I could plainly see that he was shamming, and had an eye to damages and financial consolation, as well as the obvious intention of wringing my bosom with remorse. I left him sitting up in the path, rubbing his fiery curls and surveying the cocoanut branch with which he had made such a painful acquaintance, a figure so mournful, changed, and dejected that Pingalap would scarce have known him for her Beautiful Man.

As I was hurrying down to the beach, I saw the

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schooner getting under way, and heard the boat's crew imperiously calling out to me to hasten. I broke into a run, and was almost at the water's edge when I turned to find Bo panting at my side. I stopped to see what she wanted, and when she forced a little parcel into my pocket I suddenly remembered the present of which Hinton had spoken.

"Good-bye, Bo," I cried, wringing her little fist in mine. "Many thanks for the fish-hook, which I shall always keep in memory of our travels."

All the way out to the schooner I seemed to feel the package growing heavier and heavier in my pyjama pocket, and the suspicion more than once crossed my mind that it was no fish-hook at all. Feeling loath to determine the matter before the men, who must needs have seen and wondered at the transaction from the boat, I kept down my curiosity until I could satisfy it more privately on board. Then, as the captain and I were watching the extraordinary antics of the Beautiful Man (who had rushed down to the beach and thrown himself into a native canoe, in the impossible hope of overtaking us, alternately paddling and shaking his fist demoniacally in the air), I drew out the package and cut it open with my knife. In a neat little beadwork bag (which still conserved a lurking scent of monkey), and carefully done up in fibre, like a jewel in cotton wool, I found a shining treasure of gold and silver coin.

One hundred and thirty-seven dollars!

It was Bo's restitution.

THE DUST OF DEFEAT

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THEY took their accustomed path beside the strait, walking slowly side by side, each conscious that they would never again be together. The melancholy pines, rising from the water's edge to the very summit of the mountains, gave that look of desolation which is the salient note of New Caledonian landscape. Across the narrow strait as calm and clear as some sweet English river, the rocky shore rose steep and precipitous, cloaked still in pines. A faint, thrilling roar broke at times upon the ear, and told of Fitzroy's mine far up on the hill, its long chutes emptying chrome on the beach below. Except for this, there was not a sound that bespoke man's presence or any sign that betrayed his habitation or handiwork.

"This is our last day," he said. "Do you not once wish to see the little cabin where I have eaten my heart out these dozen years? Do you never mean to ask me what brought me here?"

"I would like to know," she answered; "but I was afraid. I did n't wish to be—to be—"

"Thank you," he said. "Thank you for that unspoken word. You did not wish to be disillusioned—to be told that the man you have treated with such condescension was a mere vulgar criminal, a garroter perhaps, such a one as you have read of in Gaboriau's

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romances. Ah, mademoiselle, when you have heard my unhappy story,—that story which no one has ever listened to save the counsel that defended me,—you will perhaps think better of poor Paul de Charruel.”

“You are innocent?” she cried, looking up at him with eyes full of tenderness and curiosity. “You have shielded some one?”

M. de Charruel shook his head. “I am not innocent,” he said. “I am no martyr, mademoiselle—not, at least, in the sense you are good enough to imply. I was fortunate to get transportation for life, doubly fortunate to obtain this modified liberty after only three years. You may, however, congratulate yourself that your friend is a model prisoner; his little farm has been well reported on by the Chef de l’Administration Pénitentiaire; it compares favourably with Leclair’s, the vitriol-thrower of Rue d’Enfer, and his early potatoes are said to rival those of Palitzi the famous poisoner.”

His companion shuddered.

“Pardon me,” he continued. “God knows, I have no desire to be merry; my heart is heavy enough, in all conscience.”

“You will tell me everything,” she said softly.

He walked along in silence for several minutes, moody and preoccupied, staring on the ground before him.

“I suppose I ought to begin with my father and mother, in the old-fashioned way,” he said at last, with a sudden smile. “There are conventionalities even for convicts! My father (if we are to go so far back)

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was the Comte de Charruel, one of the old noblesse; my mother an American lady from whom I got the little English I possess, as well as a disposition most rash, nervous, and impulsive. There were two of us children—my sister Berthe and myself, she the younger by six years. My father died when I reached twenty years, just as I entered the Eighty-sixth Hussars as a sub-lieutenant. Had he survived I might perhaps have been saved many miseries and unhappinesses; on the other hand, he, the soul of honour, might have been standing here in my place, condemned as I have been to a lifelong exile.

“I was a good officer. Titled, rich, and well born, there was accorded me the friendship of the aristocratic side of the regiment; a good comrade, and free from stupid pride, I stood well with those who had risen from the ranks and the humbler spheres of society. Many a time I was the only officer at home in either camp, and popular in both. When I look back upon my army life, so gay, so animated, so filled with small successes and commendations from my superiors, I wish that I had been fated to die in what was the very zenith of my happiness and prosperity.

“My mother, except for a short time each year at our hôtel in Paris, lived in our old château in Nemours, entertaining, in an unobtrusive fashion, many of the greatest people in France; for the entrée of few houses was more eagerly sought than our own. Though we were not so well born as some, nor so rich as many, my mother contrived to be always in request, and to

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make her *salon* the centre of all the gaiety and wit of France.

"From her earliest infancy my sister Berthe was counted one of the company at the château, and while I was at the *lycée* and afterwards at St. Cyr, she was leading the life of a great lady at Nemours. Marshals of France were her cavaliers; famous poets and musicians played with her dolls and shared her confidences; men and women distinguished in a thousand ways paid court to her childish beauty. Beauty, perhaps, I ought not to say, for her charm lay most in the extraordinary liveliness and intrepidity of her character, which captivated every beholder. Indeed, she ought to have been the man of the family, I the girl—so diverse were our tastes and aspirations, our whole outlook on life.

"You, of course, cannot recollect the amazing revolution that swept over Europe when I was a young man—that upheaval of everything old, accepted, and conventional, which was confined to no one country, but raged equally throughout them all. Huxley, Darwin, Haeckel, Renan, and Herbert Spencer were names that grew familiar by incessant repetition; young ladies whom one remembered last in boxes at the opera, or surrounded by admirers at balls and great assemblies, now threw themselves passionately into this new Renaissance. One you would find studying higher mathematics; another geology and chemistry; another still, teaching the children of thieves and cut-throats how to read. Girls you had seen at their father's table, with downcast eyes and blushes when

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one spoke to them, now demanded separate establishments of their own; worked their way, if necessary, through foreign universities; fought like little tigers for the privilege of studying till two in the morning and starving with one another in the gloomiest parts of the town. Nor were the young men behind their sisters: to them also had come the new revelation, this self-denying and austere standard of life, this religion of violent intellectual effort. To many it was ennobling to a supreme degree; and while our girls boldly made their way into avenues hitherto closed to women, there were everywhere young men, no less ardent and disinterested, to support them in the mêlée. In every house there was this revolt of the young against the old, this perpetual argument of humanitarianism against apathy and *laissez-faire*.

"To me it all seemed the most frightful madness. I was bewildered to see bright eyes pursuing studies which I knew myself to be so wearisome, taking joy where I had found only vexation and fatigue. Like all my caste, I was old-fashioned and thought a woman's place at home. You must not go to the army for new ideas. It was no pleasure to me to see delicately nurtured ladies rubbing shoulders with raw medical students or tainting their pretty ears with the unrestrained conversation of men. You must remember how things have changed in eighteen years; you can scarcely conceive the position of those forerunners of your sex in Europe, so much has public opinion altered for the better. In my day we went to extremes on either side, for it was then that the battle

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was fought. The elders would not give way an inch ; the children dashed into a thousand extravagances. To some it looked as though the dissolution of society was at hand. Girls asked men to marry them,—men they had seen perhaps but once,—in order that they might gain the freedom accorded to married women and secure themselves against the intolerable interference of their families. Some of them never saw their husbands again, nor could even recollect their names without an effort. Ah, it was frightful ! It was a revolution !

“In spite of all her liberal opinions, her unconventional views, her apparent allegiance to the new religion, my mother soon took her place amid the reactionary ranks, while my sister, the *mondaine*, just as surely joined the rebellion. As I said before, it was the battle of the young against the old ; age, rather than conviction, assigned one’s position in the fight. Our house, hitherto so free from domestic discord, became the theatre of furious quarrels between mother and daughter—quarrels not about gowns, allowances, suitors, or unpaid bills, but involving questions abstract and sublime : one’s liberty of free development ; one’s duty to one’s self, to mankind ; one’s obligation, in fact, to cast off all shackles and take one’s place in the revolution so auspiciously beginning.

“The end of it was that Berthe left Nemours, coming to Paris without my mother’s permission, to study medicine with a Russian friend of hers, a girl as defiant and undaunted as herself. This was Sonia Boremykin, with whose name you must be familiar.

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Needless to say, I was interdicted from giving any assistance to my sister, my mother imploring me not to supply the means by which Berthe's ruin might be accomplished. But I could not allow my sister to starve to death in a garret, and if I disobeyed my poor mother, she had at least the satisfaction of knowing that my sympathies were on her side of the quarrel. My greatest distress, indeed, was that Berthe would accept so little, for she was crazy to be a martyr, and was, besides, prompted by a generous feeling not to take a sou more than the meagre earnings of her companion. So they lived and starved together, these two remarkable young women, turning their backs on every luxury and refinement. Either, for the asking, could have received a thousand-franc note within the hour; for each a château stood with open doors; for each there was a dowry of more than respectable dimensions, and lovers who would have been glad to take them for their *beaux yeux* alone! And yet they chose to live in a garret, to be constantly affronted as they went unescorted through the wickedest parts of Paris, to subsist on food the most unappetising and unwholesome. For what? To cut up dead paupers in the Sorbonne!

"I was often there to see them with the self-imposed task of trying to lighten the burden of their sacrifices. I introduced food in paper bags, and surreptitiously dropped napoleons in dark corners—that is, until I was once detected. Afterwards they watched me like hawks. Sometimes they were so hungry that tears came into their eyes at the sight of what I brought;

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at others they would appear insulted, and throw it remorselessly out of the window. Though I had no sympathy whatever with their aims, I was profoundly interested, profoundly touched, as one might be at the sight of an heroic enemy. Their convictions were not my convictions; their mode of life I thought detestable: but who could withhold admiration for so much courage, so much self-denial, in two beautiful young women? I used often to bring with me my old colonel, a glorious veteran with whom I was always a favourite, and the girls liked to hear our sabres clank as we mounted the grimy stair, and to see our brilliant uniforms in their garret. It reminded them of the *monde* they had resigned; besides, they needed an audience of their own caste who could appreciate, as none other, their sacrifices and their fortitude. Mademoiselle Sonia used to look very kindly at me on the occasion of my visits, never growing angry, as my sister did, at my stupidity, or by my failure to understand their high-flown notions of duty. Once, when I was accidentally hurt at the *salle d'armes* by a button coming off my opponent's foil, it was she who dressed my wound with the greatest tenderness and skill, converting me for all time as to the medical career for women. Poor Sonia, how her eyes sparkled at her little triumph!

"On one of my visits I was thunder-struck to find before me the Marquis de Gonse, a gentleman much older than myself, with whom I had not actual acquaintance, though we had a host of friends in com-

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mon. Upon his departure I protested vehemently against this outrage of the proprieties. I besought them to show a little more circumspection in their choice of friends, admitting no man to their intimacy who counted not his fifty years. But my protestations were received with laughter; I was told that the marquis was a friend of Sonia's father, and was trying to effect a reconciliation highly to be desired. Berthe accused me mockingly of wishing to keep the little Russian to myself. Indeed, she said, what could be more demoralising to her companion than the constant presence of a beautiful young hussar? With her saucy tongue she put me completely to the blush; in vain I pleaded and argued; de Gonse's footing was assured. Yet, if they had searched all Paris, they could not have found a man more undesirable, or more dangerous for two young women to know. Ardent, generous, and himself full of aspirations for the advancement of humanity, nothing was better calculated to appeal to him than the struggle in which my sister was engaged. His sympathy, his sincere desire to put his own shoulder to the wheel, were more to be feared than the most strenuous protestations of regard. If he had made love to my sister, she was enough a woman of the world to have sent him to the right about; but he adopted, all unconsciously, I am sure, a more subtle plan to win her good opinion: he was converted!

"If I shut my eyes I can see him sitting there in that low garret as he appeared on one occasion which particularly imprinted itself on my mind; such a high-

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bred, such a distinguished figure, with his silk hat and gloves beside the box which had been given him for a chair, and his face full of wonder and sadness! You have read of Marie Antoinette in prison, of her sufferings so uncomplainingly borne, of her nobility and steadfastness in the squalor of her cell! You have revolted, perhaps, at the picture—clined your little fists and felt a great bursting of the heart? It was thus with M. de Gonse. Berthe he had often seen at our château in Nemours; Sonia's father he had known in Russia, a general of reputation, standing high in the favour of the Czar. None was better aware than he of what the young ladies had given up. I could see that he was deeply moved. He asked many questions; at times he exclaimed beneath his breath. He insisted on learning everything—the amount of their income, the nature of their studies, all their makeshifts and contrivances. The two beautiful, solitary girls, from whom sympathy and appreciation had so long been withheld, unbared their lives to us without reserve. Berthe told us, amid the passionate interjections of Sonia Boremykin, the story of their struggles at the medical school: the open hostility of the professors; the brutal sneers and innuendoes; the indescribable affronts that had been put upon them. During this terrible recital—for it was terrible to hear of outrages so patiently borne, of insults which bring the blood to the cheek even to remember after all these years—de Gonse rose more than once from his seat, walking up and down like one possessed, uttering cries of rage and pity. It was no feigned anger, no

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play-acting to win the regard of these poor women. Let me do the man that justice.

"I don't think my sister was prepared for the effect of her eloquence on the marquis, or could have foreseen, even for a moment, the tempest she had raised within his breast. He swore he would challenge every professor in the school; that he would unloose spadassins on the offending students, whose bones should be broken with clubs; that to blight their careers in after life he would make his business, his pleasure, his joy! It was with difficulty that he was recalled to the realities of every-day existence, my sister telling him frankly that such a course as he proposed might benefit woman in general, but could not fail to destroy the future of herself and Sonia Boremykin. To be everywhere talked about, to get their names into the newspapers, to be pointed at on the street as the victims of frightful insults—what could be more detestable, more ruinous to the careers they hoped to make? De Gonse was reluctantly compelled to withdraw his plans of extermination; for who could controvert the logic with which they were demolished or fail to see the justice of my sister's contention? Confessing himself beaten on this point, he sought for some other solution of the problem. Private tutors? Intolerably expensive, came the answer; poor substitutes for one of the greatest schools in Europe; unable, besides, to confer the longed-for degree. The University of Geneva, famous for its generous treatment of women? Good, but its diploma would not carry the desired prestige in France. I hazarded boys'

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clothes and false mustaches; but my remark was greeted with a shout of laughter and a half-blushing confession from Mademoiselle Sonia that one experiment in this direction had sufficed. It was to the marquis that light finally came.

“‘Fool! Idiot!’ he thundered, striking himself on his handsome forehead with his fist. ‘Why did I not think of it before? To-morrow I join the medical school myself—the student de Gonse, cousin of the marquis, a man tired of the hollowness and the trivialities of high life. I do nothing to show I am acquainted with you, nothing to compromise you in the faintest manner. But de Gonse, the medical student, is a gentleman, a man of honour. A companion ventures on a remark derogatory to the dignity of the young ladies; behold, his head cracks like an egg against his desk! Another opens his mouth, only to discover that *le boxe* (you know I am quite an Anglais) is driving the teeth down his throat, setting up medical complications of an extraordinary and baffling nature. A professor so far forgets his manhood as to heap insults on the undefended; the strange medical student tweaks his nose in the tribune and challenges him to combat! How simple, how direct!’

“Imagine my surprise a few days later to learn that this had been no idle gasconade on the marquis’s part. True to his word, he had appeared at the school elaborately attired for the part he was to play, even to a detestable cravat and a profusion of cheap jewellery! Unquestionably there must have been others in the plot, for no formalities anywhere tied his hands or

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opposed the least obstacle to his audacity. As one would have expected from a man so eager and so full of resource, the object for which he came was soon achieved. Mingling with the students as one of themselves, he singled out those who went the farthest in persecuting the women, and insensibly cajoled them into a better way of conduct. The minority, too, those that still kept alive the chivalry of young France, were strengthened and encouraged by the force of his example, so that the crusade, once authoritatively begun, went on magnificently of itself. Not a blow was struck, not a wry word said, and behold, de Gonse had accomplished a miracle ! From that time the position of women was assured ; protectors arose on every side as though by magic ; in a word, gallantry became the fashion. When professors ventured on impertinences, hisses now greeted them in place of cheers ; they changed colour, and were at pains to explain away their words. The battle, indeed, was won.

“ Had de Gonse contented himself with this victory, which saved my sister and Mademoiselle Sonia from countless mortifications, how much human misery would have been averted, how great a tragedy would have remained unplayed ! But evil and good are inexplicably blended in this world, a commonplace of whose truth, mademoiselle, you will have many opportunities of verifying. Having acted so manly a part, one so calculated to earn the gratitude and esteem of these poor girls, he turned from one to the other, wondering with which he should reward himself. I have reason to think his choice first fell on Sonia Boremy-

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kin, who had the whitest skin and the prettiest blue eyes in the world. How can I doubt, to judge from her wild, tragic after life, but that he could have persuaded her to her ruin? But he must have paused half-way, struck by the incomparable superiority of my sister. In beauty she was not perhaps the equal of her companion, though to compare *blonde* and *brune* is a matter of supererogation. In other ways, at least, there never lived a woman more desirable than Berthe de Charruel. She possessed to a supreme degree the charm that springs from intelligence,—I might say from genius,—which, when found in the person of a young and beautiful woman, is almost irresistible to any man that gains her favour. Jeanne d'Arc was such another as my poor sister, and must have been impelled on her career by something of the same fire, something of the same passionate earnestness. To break a heart like hers seemed to de Gonse the crown to a hundred vulgar intrigues and *bonnes fortunes*.

“Of course, I knew nothing of this gradual undoing of my sister, though during the course of my visits to the little garret I often found the marquis in the society of Berthe and her friend. I disliked to see him there, but I was powerless to interfere. I was often puzzled, indeed, by the ambiguous conduct of Mademoiselle Sonia, who had the queerest way of looking at me, and whose eyes were always meeting mine in singular glances, whether of warning or appeal I was at a loss to tell. Her words, too, often left me uneasy, recurring to me constantly when I was in the saddle at the head of my troop or as I lay awake in bed await-

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ing the reveille. I wondered if the little Russian were making love to me, for, like all hussars, I was something of a coxcomb, though, to do me justice, neither a lady-killer nor a pursuer of adventures. It was in my profession that I found my only distraction, my only mistress. I am almost ashamed to tell you how good I was, how innocent—how in me the Puritan stock of my mother seemed to find a fresh recrudescence. Some thought me a hypocrite, others a coward; but I was neither.

“I learned the truth late one afternoon from Sonia Boremykin, who came to my quarters closely veiled, in a condition of agitation the most frightful. I could not believe her; I seemed to see only another of her devices to win my regard. My sister! My Berthe! It was impossible! I said to her the cruelest things; I was beside myself. She went on her knees; she hid nothing; it was all true. My anger flamed like a blazing fire; I rushed out of the barracks regardless of my duties—of everything except revenge. A lucky *rencontre* on the street put me on de Gonse’s track, and I ran him down in the *salle* of the Jockey Club. He was standing under one of the windows, reading a letter by the fading light, a note, as like as not, he had just received from Berthe. I think he changed colour when he saw me; at least, he drew back with a start.

“I lifted my glove and struck him square across his handsome face.

“‘You will understand what that is for, M. le Marquis de Gonse!’ I cried.

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"He turned deadly white, and with a quick movement caught my wrists in both his hands.

"*'Mon enfant !'* he exclaimed in a loud voice, which he tried to invest with a tone of jocularly, 'you carry your high spirits beyond all reason; I am too old to enjoy being hit upon the nose.' Then in a lower key he whispered: 'Paul, calm thyself; for the love of God, do not force a quarrel. Come outside and let us talk with calmness.'

"But I was in no humour to be cajoled. I fiercely shook off his restraining hands. 'Messieurs,' I cried, as the others, detecting a scene, began to close round us, 'Messieurs, behold how I buffet the face of the Marquis de Gonse!' And with that I again flicked my glove across his face.

"De Gonse slunk back with a sort of sob.

"*'Captain de Charruel and I have had an unfortunate difference of opinion,'* he cried, recovering his aplomb on the instant. 'It seems we cannot agree upon the Spanish Succession. M. le Comte, my seconds will await on you this evening.'

"I turned and left the club, my head in a whirl, my face so distraught and haggard that I carried consternation through the jostling street, the people making way for me as though I were a madman. To obtain seconds was my immediate preoccupation, a task of no difficulty for a young hussar. My colonel kindly condescended to act, and with him my friend Nicholas van Greef, the military attaché of the Netherlands government. To both I told the same story of the Spanish Succession and the quarrel of which it had been the

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occasion. But my colonel smiled and laid a meaning finger against his nose; the Dutchman said drily it was well to keep ladies' names out of such affairs. I am convinced, however, that neither of them had the faintest glimmering of the truth. Having thus arranged matters with my seconds, I attempted next to find my poor sister, hastening up her interminable stairs with an impatience I leave you to imagine. Needless to say, she was not in the garret, which was inhabited by Mademoiselle Sonia alone, her pretty face swollen with weeping, her humour one of extraordinary caprices and contradictions. She blamed me altogether for the catastrophe: I ought not to have given Berthe a sou; I ought to have starved her back into servitude. Women were intended for slaves; to make them free was to give them the rope to hang themselves. For her part, said mademoiselle, she thought a convent the right place for girls, and crochet work the best occupation! At any other time I might have stared to hear such sentiments from my sister's friend, but for the moment I could think of nothing but Berthe. To find her was my one desire. In this, however, Sonia would afford me no assistance, frankly asking what would be the good.

"‘The harm is done, my poor Paul,’ she said, looking at me sorrowfully. ‘Why should I expose you or her to an interview so unpleasant? How could it profit any one?’

"I could not altogether see the force of this acquiescence in evil. I said that the honour of one of the oldest families in France was at stake; that if my

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sister did not leave the marquis I should kill her with my own hands and fly the country. I implored Mademoiselle Sonia, with every argument I thought might move her, to betray my sister's hiding-place. But she kept putting me off, mocked at my impatience, and tried to learn, on her side, whether or not I meant to fight de Gonse.

“‘If you really wish to find out where she is,’ she cried at last, ‘why don’t you make me tell you? Why don’t you take me by the throat and pound my head against the wall, as they do down-stairs with such admirable success? Those women positively adore their men.’ As she spoke she threw back her head and exposed her charming neck with a gesture half defiant, half submissive! Upon my soul, I felt like carrying her suggestion into effect and choking her in good earnest, for I had become furious at her contrariety. But, restraining the impulse, I saw there was nothing left for me save to retire.

“‘Mademoiselle Boremykin,’ I said, ‘you are heartless and wicked beyond anything I could have imagined possible. You have helped to bring a noble name to dishonour, and in place of remorse your only feelings seem those of levity. I have the honour of wishing you good day.’

“De Gonse and I met the following morning in the Bois de Boulogne. His had been the choice of arms, and he selected rapiers, knowing, like all men of the world, that a pistol has the knack of killing. I ground my teeth at his decision, for he had the reputation of being a fine fencer, while I could boast no more than

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the average proficiency. He appeared to great advantage on the field; so cool, so handsome, such a *grand seigneur*—in every way so marked a contrast to myself. It was not unnatural, however: he was there to prick me in the shoulder, I to kill him if I could. Small wonder that my face was livid, that my eyes burned like coals in my head, that I was petulant with my own seconds, insulting towards my adversary's. I looked at these with scorn, the supporters of a scoundrel, themselves, no doubt, seducers and libertines like him they served. My dear old colonel chid me for my discourtesy—bade me be a *galant homme* for his sake, if not for mine. I kissed his wrinkled hand before them all; I said I respected men only who were honourable like himself. Every one laughed at my extravagance, at the poor old man's embarrassment. It was plain they considered me a coward. They said things I could not help overhearing. But I cared for nothing. My God, no! I was there to kill de Gonse, not to pick quarrels with his friends.

"We were placed in position. Everything was *en règle*. The doctors, of whom there were a couple, lit cigarettes and did not even trouble to open their wallets. They knew it to be an affair of scratches.

"The handkerchief fell. We set to, warily, cautiously, looking into each other's eyes like wild beasts. More than once he could have killed me, so openly did I expose myself to his attack, so unconscionably did I force him back, hoping to give lunge for lunge, my life for his. But in his adventurous past de Gonse must often have crossed swords with men no

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less desperate than myself; it was no new thing to him to face a determined foe, or to guard himself against thrusts that were meant to kill. His temper was under admirable control; he handled his weapon like a master in the school of arms, and allowed me to tire myself out against what seemed a wall of steel. Suddenly he forced my guard with a stroke like a lightning-flash; I felt my left arm burn as though melted wax had been dropped upon it. Some one seized my sword; some one caught me in his arms!

“My dizziness, my bewilderment, were the sensations of a moment, and in a trice I was myself again. The wound was nothing—a nicely calculated stroke through the fleshy part of the arm. I laughed when they talked of honour satisfied and of our return to barracks. I said I never felt better in my life. It was true, for I was possessed with a berserker rage, as they call it in the old Norse sagas; a bullet through my heart could not have hurt me then. The seconds demurred; they told me that I was in their hands; that I was overruled; repeated, like parrots, that honour was satisfied. This only made me laugh the more. I went up to the marquis and asked him were it necessary for me to strike him again? I called him a coward, and swore I would post him in every salon and club in Paris. I slapped him in the face with my bare hand—my right, for my left felt numb and strange. There was another scene. De Gonse appeared discomposed for the first time; the seconds were pale and more than perturbed. One had a sense

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of death being in the air. There were consultations apart; appeals to which I would not listen; expostulations as idle as the wind. De Gonse, trembling with wrath, left himself unreservedly to his seconds, walking up and down at a little distance like a sentinel on duty. I also strolled about to show how strong and fit I was—the angriest, the bitterest man in France.

“At length it was decided that we might continue the combat. De Gonse solemnly protested, bidding us all take notice that he had been allowed no alternative. My colonel was almost in tears. Repeatedly, as a favour to himself, he besought me to apologise for that second blow and retire from the field. But I was adamant. ‘*Mon colonel,*’ I said to him, in a whisper, ‘this is a quarrel in which one of us must fall. Let me assure you it is not about a trifle.’

“Again we ranged ourselves; again we grasped our rapiers, saluted, and stood ready for the game to begin. The marquis’s coolness had somewhat forsaken him. The finest equanimity is ruffled by a buffet in the face; one cannot command calm at will. His friends said afterwards that he showed extraordinary self-control, but I should rather have described it as extraordinary uneasiness. No duellist cares for a berserker foe. De Gonse was, moreover, of a superstitious fancy. There are such things, besides, as presentiments; I think he must have had one then. God knows, perhaps he was struggling with remorse. The handkerchief fell; we crossed swords, and the combat was resumed with the utmost vivacity. The air rang with

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the shivering steel. The doctors smoked no longer, but looked on with open mouths. A duel in grim earnest is seldom seen in France, though I venture to say there was one that morning. It lasted only a minute; we had scarcely well begun before I felt a stinging in my side, and saw, as in a dream, my enemy's triumphant face, red with his exertions. The exasperation of that moment passes the power of words to describe. This was my revenge, this a villain's punishment on the field of honour! He would leave it without a scratch, to be lionised in salons, to relate in boudoirs the true inwardness of the quarrel! Remember, I felt all this within the confines of a single second, as a drowning man in no more brief a space passes his entire life in review. Imagine, if you can, my rage, my uncontrollable indignation, my unbounded fury. What I did then I would do now,—by God, I would,—if need be, a dozen times! I caught his rapier in my left hand and held it in the aching wound, while with my unimpeded right I stabbed him through the body, again and again, with amazing swiftness—so that he fell pierced in six places. There was a terrible outcry; shouts of 'Murder!' 'Coward!' 'Assassin!' on every side looks of horror and detestation. One of the marquis's seconds beset me like a maniac with his cane, and I believe I should have killed him too had not the old colonel run between us.

"The other second was supporting de Gonse's head and assisting the surgeons to staunch the pouring blood. But it was labour lost; any one could see that he was doomed. From a little distance I watched them

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crowding about him where he lay on the grass ; for I had drawn apart, sick and dizzy with my own wounds, conscious that I was now an outcast among men. At last one came towards me ; it was Clut, the doctor. He said nothing, but drew me gently towards the group he had just quitted. They opened for me to pass as though I were a leper. A second later I stood beside the dying man, gazing down at his face.

“ ‘He wishes to shake hands with you,’ said the other doctor, solemnly, guiding the marquis’s hand upward in his own. ‘Let his death atone, he says ; he wishes to part in amity.’

“I folded my arms.

“ ‘No, monsieur,’ I said. ‘What you ask is impossible.’ With that I walked away, not daring to look back lest I might falter in my resolution. I can say honestly that de Gonse’s death weighs on me very little ; yet I would give ten years of my life to unsay those final words—to recall that last brutality. In my dreams I often see him so, holding out the hand, which I try to grasp. I hear the doctor saying, ‘He wishes to part in amity.’

“I fainted soon after leaving my opponent’s side. I lay on the ground where I fell, no one caring to come to my assistance. When consciousness returned I saw them lifting the marquis’s body into a carriage, and I needed no telling to learn that he was dead. My colonel and Van Greef assisted me into another cab, neither of them saying a word nor showing me the least compassion. I suppose I should have been thankful they did so much. Was not I accursed?

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Were they not involved in my dishonour? They abandoned me, wounded, faint, and parching with thirst, to find my own way to Paris. Alone? No, not altogether. On the seat beside me my colonel laid a flask of brandy and a loaded pistol. The first I drank; the revolver I pitched out of window. I never thought to kill myself. For cheating at cards, for several varieties of dishonour, yes. But not for what I had done—never in all the world. My conscience was as undisturbed as that of a little child; excepting always that—why had I not taken his hand!

“I was arrested, of course, and tried—tried for murder. You see, there were too many in the secret for it to be long kept. It was a *cause célèbre*, attracting universal attention. The quarrel concerned the Spanish Succession; as to that they could not shake me. There were many surmises, many suspicions, but no one stumbled on the truth. To a single man only was it told—Maître Le Roux, my counsel. Him I had to tell, for at first he would not take up my case at all. There was a great popular outcry against me, the army furious and ashamed, the bourgeoisie in hysterics. I was condemned; sentenced to death; reprieved at the particular intercession of the Marquise de Gonse, the dead man’s mother, who threw herself on her knees before the Chief Executive—reprieved to transportation for life!

“You will be surprised I mention not my mother. Ah, mademoiselle, there are some things which will not permit themselves to be told—even to you. She

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went mad. She died. My military degradation is another of those things unspeakable. The epaulets were torn from my shoulders, the *galons* from my sleeves, my sword broken in two; all this in public before my regiment in hollow square. Picture for yourself, on every side, those walls of faces, scarcely one not familiar; my colonel, choking on his charger, the agitated master of ceremonies; my former friends and comrades trying not to meet my eye; in the ranks many of my own troopers crying, and the officers swearing at them below their breath. My God, it was another Calvary!

“At Havre they kept me long in prison, waiting for the transport to carry me to New Caledonia. It was there I heard of my sister's death, the news being brought to me by a young French lady, a friend of Berthe's. My sister had poisoned herself, appalled at what she had done. There was no scandal, however, no sensational inquiry. She was too clever for that, too scientific; it was by no vulgar means that she sought her end. Assembling her friends, she bade them good-bye in turn, and divided among them her little property, her money, jewels, and clothes. She died in the typhus hospital to which she had volunteered her services—a victim to her own imprudence, said the doctors; a martyr to duty, proclaimed the world. She was accorded the honour of a municipal funeral (though her actual body was thrown into a pit of lime): the *maire* and council in carriages, the charity children on foot, the *pompiers* with their engine, a battalion of the National Guard, and the band

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of the Ninth Marine Infantry! What mockery! What horror!

“Here in New Caledonia I looked forward to endure frightful sufferings, to be herded with the dregs of mankind in a squalor unspeakable. But, on the contrary, I was received everywhere with kindness. The rigours of imprisonment were relieved by countless exemptions. I found, as I had read before in books, that the sight of a great gentleman in misfortune is one very moving to common minds; and if he bears his sorrows with manly fortitude and dignity, he need not fear for friends. To my jailers I was invariably ‘Monsieur’; they apologised for intruding on my privacy, for setting me the daily task; they would have looked the other way had I been backward or disinclined. I was neither, for I was not only ready to conform to the regulations, but something within me revolted at being unduly favoured.

“At the earliest moment permissible by law I left the prison to become a serf, the initial stage of freedom, hired out at twelve francs a month to any one who required my services. I fell into the hands of Fitzroy, here, the mine-owner, who treated me with a consideration so distinguished, so entirely generous, that when I earned my right to a little farm of my own I begged and received permission to settle near him. The government gave me these few acres on the hill, rations for a year, and a modest complement of tools and appliances, exacting only one condition: my *parole d'honneur*. It is only Frenchmen who could ask such a thing of a convict, but, as I told you be-

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fore, I was regarded as an exception, a man whose word might safely be taken.

“Never was one less inclined to escape than myself; my estates, which are extensive and valuable, would have instantly paid the forfeit; and though I am prohibited from receiving a sou of their revenues, I am not disallowed to direct how my money shall be used. You will wonder why I weigh possessions so intangible against a benefit which would be so real. But the traditions of an old family become almost a religion. To jeopardise our lands would be a sacrilege of which I am incapable; we phantoms come and go, but the race must continue on its ancestral acres; the noble line must be maintained unbroken. So peremptory is this feeling that you will see it at work in families that boast no more than three generations. The father’s château is dear; the grandfather’s precious; the great-grandfather’s a thing to die for! Think what it is among those, like ourselves, whose lineage and lands go back to Charlemagne! Though I can never return to France myself, though I shall die on my little hillside farm and be buried by strangers, still, it is much to me that the estates will pass to those of my blood. I have cousins, children of my uncle, who will succeed me—manly, handsome boys, whose careers are my especial care. Their children will often ask,—their children’s children, perhaps,—of that portrait of a man in chains, in the stripes of a convict, that hangs in our great picture-gallery at Nemours, beneath it this legend: ‘Paul de Charruel, painted in prison at his own request.’ At the prompt-

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ing of vanity, of humility,—I scarcely know which to call it,—I had this done before I quitted France for ever, the artist coming daily to study me through the bars; and ordered it hung amid the effigies of my race. I suppose it hangs there now, slowly darkening in that empty house. It shall be my only plea to posterity, my only cry.

“It is nearly sixteen years ago since these events took place. For more than twelve I have lived like a peasant on my little farm, the busiest of the busy; up at dawn, to bed by nine o'clock. Blossoming under a care so sedulous and undivided, it has yielded me a rich return for my labour. My heart it has kept from breaking; my hands it has never left empty of a task to fill. There is a charm in freedom and solitude, a solace to be found in the society of plants, beyond the power of words to adequately express. Our government is right when it gives the convict a piece of land and a spade, leaving him to work out his own salvation. I took their spade; I found their salvation. On that hillside there I have passed from youth to middle age; my hair has turned to grey; my talents, my strength, all that I have inherited or acquired in mind or body, have been expended in hoeing cabbages, in weeding garden-beds, in felling the forest-trees which encumbered my little estate. Yet I have not been unhappy, if you except one day each year, a day I should gladly see expunged from my calendar. Once a year I receive from the Marquise de Gonse a letter in terms the most touching and devout, written

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in mingled vitriol and tears. This annual letter is to her, I know, a supreme sacrifice; every line of it breathes anguish and revolt. To forgive me has become the touchstone of her religion, a test to which she submits herself with agony. I cannot—I do not—blame her for hating me; I would not have her learn the truth for anything on earth: but is it a pleasure for me to be turned the other cheek? Is it any consolation to be forgiven in terms so scathing? It is terrible, that piety which deceives itself, which attempts to achieve what is impossible. And she not only forgives me: she sends me little religious books, texts to put upon my walls, special tracts addressed to those in prison. She asks about my soul, and tells me she wearies the President with intercessions for my release. Poor, lonely old woman, bereft of her only son! In the bottom of her heart, does she not wish me torn limb from limb? Would she not love to see me in the fires of hell?

“This, mademoiselle, concludes my story. To-morrow, in your father’s beautiful yacht, you leave our waters, never to return. You will pursue your adventurous voyage, encircling the world, to reach at last that far American home, receiving on the way countless new impressions that will each obliterate the old. Somewhere there awaits you a husband, a man of untarnished name and honour. In his love you will forget still more; your memories will fade into dreams. Will you ever recall this land of desolation? Will you ever recall de Charruel the convict?”

He had not looked at the girl once during the

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course of his long narrative. He felt that she had been affected—how much or how little, he did not know, a certain delicacy, a certain fear, withholding him. When at last he sought her face he saw that she had been crying.

“I shall never forget,” she said.

They walked in silence until, at a parting of the paths, he said: “This one leads to my little cabin. Come; it will interest you, perhaps—the roof that has sheltered me for twelve irrevocable years. You are not afraid?” he asked.

She made a motion of dissent, drawing closer to him as though to express her confidence.

A few hundred yards brought them to a grassy paddock fenced with limes, through which they passed to reach a grove of breadfruit and orange trees beyond. On the farther side the house itself could be seen, a wooden hut embowered in a bougainvillea of enormous size. It looked damp, dark, and uninviting. Not a breath stirred the tree-tops above nor penetrated into the deep shade below; except for the drone of bees and a sound of falling water in the distance, the intense quiet was untroubled by a sound. De Charruel led the way in silence, with the preoccupation of a man who had too often trod that path before to need his wits to guide him. Reaching the hut, he threw open the door and stood back to allow his companion to enter before him. The little room was bare and clean; a table, a book-shelf, a couple of chairs, the only furniture; the only ornaments a shining lamp and a vase of roses. Miss Amy Coulstoun took

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a seat in the long canvas chair which the convict drew out for her. The air seemed hot and suffocating, the perfume of the orange-blossoms almost insupportable. She was possessed, besides, with a thought, a fancy, that bewildered her; that made her feel half ashamed, half triumphant; that brought the tears to her eyes repeatedly. De Charruel did not speak. He was standing in the doorway, looking down at her with a sort of awe, as though at something sacred, something he wished to imprint for ever in his mind.

"I wish to remember you as you are now!" he exclaimed—"lying back in my chair, your face a little in profile, your eyes sad and compassionate. When you are gone I shall keep this memory in my heart; I shall cherish it; it shall live with me here in my solitude."

"I must go," she said, with a little thrill of anger or agitation in her voice. "I have stayed too long already."

He came towards her.

"I want first to show you this," he said, drawing from his pocket a jewel-case, which he almost forced into her hands. "You will not refuse me a last favour—you who have accorded me so many?"

She avoided his glance, and opened the box, giving, as she did so, an exclamation of astonishment.

It was full of rings.

"They were my poor mother's," he explained. "By special permission I was allowed to receive them here; I feared they might go astray."

There were, perhaps, ten rings in all, every one the choice of a woman of refinement and great wealth—

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diamonds, rubies, pearls, and opals, sparkling and burning in the hollow of the girl's hand. No wonder she cried out at the sight of them, and turned them over and over and over with fascinated curiosity.

"Each one has its history," said de Charruel. "This and this are heirlooms. This was a peace-offering from my father after a terrible quarrel, the particulars of which I never learned. This he gave her after my birth—are the diamonds not superb? This ruby was my mother's favourite, for it was her engagement ring, and endeared to her by innumerable recollections. She used to tell me that at her death she wished my wife to wear it always, saying it was so charged with love that she counted it a talisman."

Miss Coulstoun held it up to the light, turning it from side to side.

"It is like a pool of fire," she said.

"Won't you try it on?" he asked.

She did so, and held out her hand for him to see. The ring might have been made to the measure of her finger.

"You will never take it off again," he said. "You will keep it for a souvenir—for a remembrance."

She shook her head. "Indeed, I will not," she returned, with a smile. "Besides, is it not to be preserved for your fiancée? You cannot disregard your mother's wish."

"Why should we pretend to one another?" he broke out. "You know why I offer it to you, mademoiselle. It would be an insult for me to say I love you—I, a convict, a man disgraced and ruined past redemption."

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But I can ask you to keep my poor ring. Wear it as you might that of some one dead, some one of whom you once thought with kindness, some one who had greatly suffered."

The girl looked away.

"What you ask is impossible," she said at length, in a voice so low and sweet that it was like a caress. "I don't think you understand."

"It is your pride that prevents!" he cried. "I understand very well. If I left it you in a testament you would not scruple to take it; you would see a difference! Yet, am I not dead? Is this not my grave you see around me? Am I not the corpse of the man I once was? Trample on your pride for once, for the sake of one that loves the very ground you tread upon. Take my ring, although it is worth much money, although the *convenances* forbid. If questions are asked, say that it belonged to a man long ago passed away, whose last wish it was that you should wear it."

"I shall say it was given me by the bravest and most eloquent of men, the Comte de Charruel!" she exclaimed, with a deep blush. "You have convinced me against my will."

He cried out in protest, but even as he did so he heard the sounds of footsteps on the porch, and turned in time to see the door flung open by Fitzroy. Behind the Irishman strode the tall figure of General Couls-toun, his face overcast with anxiety.

"Thank God!" he cried when he saw his daughter. "You've been gone an age, my dear, and I've been uneasy in spite of Fitzroy, here. It's very well to say

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‘It’s all right, it’s all right’; but in an island full of con—”

“I felt quite safe under M. de Charruel’s protection,” interrupted Amy, striking that dreadful word full in the middle. “I thought you knew I was with this gentleman.”

“I don’t know that that made me feel any more—” began the general, recollecting himself in the nick of time. “Why, Amy, child, what are you doing with that ring?”

“M. de Charruel has just presented it to me, papa,” she returned. “Is it not beautiful?”

“Good God!” cried the general, “it is a ruby! I could swear it is a ruby! It must be worth a fortune!” Between each of these remarks he stared de Charruel in the face with mingled suspicion, anger, and surprise.

“I am told that it is worth about twelve thousand francs,” said the Frenchman.

The general started. Fitzroy hurriedly whispered something into his ear. “You don’t say so!” the former was overheard to say. “In a duel, was it? I did n’t know anybody was ever killed in a French—Oh, I see—yes—lost his head—”

This little aside finished, the general came back again to the attack, more civil, however, and more conciliatory in his tone.

“You must be aware,” he said, addressing de Charruel, “that no young lady can accept such a present as this from any one save a member of her family or the man to whom she is engaged. I can only think

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that my daughter has taken your ring in ignorance of its real value, forgetful for the moment that the conventionalities are the same whether in New Caledonia or New York. You will pardon me, therefore, if I feel constrained to ask you to take back your gift."

"It rests entirely with Miss Coulstoun," returned de Charruel.

"In that case, there can certainly be no question," said the general.

"I shall not give it back, papa," said Amy.

Her father stared at her in amazement, and from her distrustfully to de Charruel.

"Is he not a—convict?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And you are going to accept a present from a convict?"

"Yes."

"A present said to be worth twelve thousand francs?"

"Yes."

"My God!" he cried, "I could not have believed it possible."

At this she burst out crying.

The general put his arm round her. "Come away, my daughter," he said. "For once in my life I am ashamed of you."

"I must first say good-bye to M. de Charruel," she said through her tears, holding out her hand—the left hand, on which the ruby glowed like a drop of blood.

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The convict raised it slowly to his lips. Their eyes met for the last time.

"Good-bye," he said.

The next day, from a rocky cliff above his house, de Charruel saw the yacht hoist her white sails and steal out to sea. He watched her as long as she remained in sight, and when at last she sank over the horizon, he threw himself on the ground in a paroxysm of despair. For an hour he lay in a sort of stupor, rising only at the insistent whistle from the mine. This told him that it was twelve o'clock, and brought him back to the realities and obligations of life. Descending to the farm, he once more took up the threads of his existence, for the habits of twelve years are not to be lightly disregarded. But it was with difficulty that he brought himself to perform his usual tasks. His heart seemed dead within his breast. He wondered miserably at his former patience and industry as he saw on every side the exemplification of both. How could he ever have found contentment in such drudgery, in such pitiful digging and toiling in the dirt! What a way for a man to pass his days—an earth-stained peasant, ignobly sweating among his cabbages! Oh, the intolerable loneliness of those years! How grim they seemed as he looked back at them, those tragic, wasted years!

Tortured by the stillness and emptiness of his hut, he spent the night at Fitzroy's, lying on the bare verandah boards till daylight. But he returned home before the household was astir, lest he should be

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invited to breakfast and be expected to talk. He shrank from the thought of meeting any one, and for days afterwards kept close within the limits of his little farm, shunning every human being near him. Every convict has such phases, such mutinies of the soul. The malady runs its course like a fever, and if it does not kill or impair the victim's reason, it leaves him at last too often a hopeless sot. But, fortunately for himself, it was work, not cognac, that cured Paul de Charruel. He came to himself one day in his garden, as he was digging potatoes. He stood up, drew his hand across his face, and realised that the brain-sickness had left him. He went into the house and looked at himself in the glass, shuddering at the scarecrow he saw reflected there. He examined his clothes, his rooms, his calloused hands, with a strange, new curiosity, studying them all with the same speculation, the same surprise. He stood off, as it were, and looked at himself from a distance. He walked about his tangled, weedy farm, and wondered what had come over him these past weeks. He had been starving, he said to himself many times over—starving for companionship.

He sought out Fitzroy at the mine. It was good again to hear the Irishman's honest laugh, to clasp his honest hand, to think there was one person, at least, that cared for him. He hung about Fitzroy all that day, as though it would be death to lose sight of him—Fitzroy, his friend. He repeated that last word a dozen times. His friend! He talked wildly and extravagantly for the mere pleasure of hearing

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himself speak. He was convulsed with laughter when an accident happened to a truck, and could scarcely contain himself when Fitzroy had a mock altercation with the engineer. No one could be more humourous than Fitzroy, and the engineer was a man of admirable wit! What a fool he had been to sulk these weeks on his farm. His farm! It made him tremble to think of it, so unendurably lonely and silent it had become. It was horrible that he must return to it,—his green prison,—with its ghosts and memories.

He went back late, but not to sleep. He sat on the dark porch of his hut and thought of the woman he had lost. Like a shadow she seemed to pass beside him, and if he shut his eyes he could feel her breath against his cheek and almost hear the beating of her heart. He closed his arms on the empty air and called her name aloud, half hoping that she might come to him. But she was a thousand miles at sea, and every minute was widening the distance between them. The folly and uselessness of these repinings suddenly came over him. She was a most charming girl, but would not any charming girl have captivated him after the life he had been leading? Was he not hungry for affection? Was he not in love with love? He rose and walked up and down the porch, greatly stirred by the new current of his thoughts. Yes; he was dying for something to love—something, were it only a dog. For twelve years he had sufficed for himself, but he could do so no more.

By dawn he was at Fitzroy's, begging the Irishman

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for a black boy and a horse. A little later his messenger was galloping along the Noumea road, charged with a letter to the Chef de l'Administration Pénitentiaire to request that "le nommé de Charruel" be permitted to leave his farm for seven days. The permission was accorded almost as a matter of form, for it was not the custom to refuse anything to "le nommé de Charruel."

The count went straight to the convent and asked to see the Mother Superior. She was a stately old lady, with silvery hair, an aristocratic profile, and a voice like an ancient bell. She at once cut short his explanations, closing her ears to his official number and other particulars of his convict life.

"M. le Comte," she said, "I knew your mother very well, and your father also, whom you favour not a little. I have often thought of you out there by the strait—ah, monsieur, believe me, often."

De Charruel thanked her with ceremony.

"Your errand cannot be the same as that which brings the others," she went on, half smiling. "*Mon Dieu!*" she exclaimed, as she saw the truth in his reddening face. "You, a noble! a *chef de famille!* It is impossible."

"I am only the convict de Charruel," he answered.

The old woman looked at him with keen displeasure.

"You know the rules?" she said in an altered voice. "You know, I suppose, that you can take your choice of three. If you are not satisfied you can return in six months."

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"Oh, madame," he said, "spare me such a trial. I stipulate for two things only: give me not a poisoner nor a thief; but give me, if you can, some poor girl whose very honesty and innocence has been her ruin."

"I can very easily supply you with such a one," said the Mother Superior. "Your words apply to half the female criminals the government sends me to marry to the convicts. When I weigh their relative demerits I almost feel I am giving angels to devils, so heavy is the scale in favour of my sex. I have several young women of unusual gentleness and refinement, who could satisfy requirements the most exacting. If you like," she went on, "I shall introduce you first to a poor girl named Suzanne. In the beginning it was like caging a bird to keep her here, but insensibly she has given her heart to God and has ceased to beat her wings against the bars."

"Does she fulfil my conditions?" asked the count.

"Yes; a thousand times, yes!" exclaimed the Mother Superior. "Shall I give orders for her to be brought?"

"If you would have the kindness," said de Charruel.

There was a long waiting after the command had gone forth. All the womanliness and latent coquetry of the nuns came out in this business of making ready their charges for the ordeal; and when it was whispered that the wooer was the Comte de Charruel himself, a personage with whose romantic history there was not a soul unfamiliar, great indeed was the excitement and preparation. At last, with a modest knock,

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the door opened and let in a young girl clothed in conventual grey. She had a very pretty face, a touch hardened by past misfortunes, a figure short, well knit, and not ungraceful, and wild black eyes that shrank to the ground at the sight of the count.

The Mother Superior motioned her to take a seat.

"This is Suzanne," she said.

De Charruel rose to his feet and bowed.

There was a dead silence.

"Can you not say something?" said the old lady, turning to the count with some asperity.

"Mademoiselle," he said, with a sensation of extreme embarrassment, "I have the honour to ask you to marry me."

"You need not commit yourself," interrupted the Mother Superior. "You can have the choice of two more."

"If I saw a hundred, madame," he replied, "I could find no one I preferred to this young lady."

There was another prolonged silence.

"You must answer, Suzanne," said the old lady.

"Yes or no?"

The girl burst into tears.

"Yes or no?" reiterated the Mother.

"I weep at monsieur's extraordinary goodness," said the girl. "Yes, madame, yes."

Ten days later de Charruel was resting in the taro-field where he had been at work, when he felt Suzanne's arm around his neck and her warm lips against his forehead. He leaned back with a smile.

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"Paul," she said, with a little tremor in her voice, "you have hidden nothing from me? You have done nothing wrong, Paul?"

"Wrong!" he exclaimed. "Have I not told thee repeatedly that I am the model convict, the hero of a hundred official commendations, the shining star of the penal administration? Wrong! What dost thou mean?"

"The authorities—" she answered. "There has been a messenger from the mine with a blue official letter. Oh, Paul, it frightens me."

"Thou needst not fear," he said. "It is only some matter of routine. I could paper my house (if it would not be misunderstood) with blue official letters about nothing."

"I am so happy, Paul," she said,— "so happy that I tremble for my happiness!"

He smiled at her again as he reached his hand for the letter. Nonchalantly he tore it open, but turned deadly pale as he ran his eyes down the sheet inside.

"You must go back to prison?" she cried in a voice of agony.

He could only shake his head.

"Speak!" she cried again. "Paul, Paul, I must know, if it kills me!"

He gave her a dreadful look.

"I am pardoned," he said. "I am free!"

THE HAPPIEST DAY OF HIS LIFE

THE HAPPIEST DAY OF HIS LIFE

HIS thirtieth birthday! His first youth was behind him, with all its heartburnings, its failures, its manifold humiliations. What had he done these years past but drift, forlorn, penniless, and unattached, over those shallows where others had stuck and prospered—a gentle decline all the way from college in hope and fulfilment? The army and civil service had alike refused him. In the colonies he had toiled unremittingly in half a hundred characters,—groom, cook, boundary rider, steamer roustabout,—always sinking, always failing. Then those last four years in the Islands, and his tumble-down store in Vaiala! Had life nothing more for him than an endless succession of hot, empty days on the farthest beach of Upolu, with scarcely more to eat than the commonest Kanaka, and no other outlet for his energies than the bartering of salt beef for coprah and an occasional night's fishing on the reef? On the other hand, he was well in body, and had times of even thinking himself happy in this fag-end of the world. The old store, rotten and leaky though it was, gave him a dryer bed than he had often found in his wandering life, and the food, if monotonous and poor, was better than the empty belly with which he had often begun an arduous day in Australia. And the place was extraordi-

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narily beautiful. Yes, he had always admitted that, even in his blackest days of depression, though the beauty of it seemed almost to oppress him at times. But beautiful or not, this was a strange place for his father's son, a strange thirtieth birthday for one who had begun the world with every prospect of faring well and rising high in its esteem, and the sense of his failure again seized him by the throat.

The noise of an incoming boat drew him to the door, and he looked out to see the pastor's old whaler heading through the reef. They had made a night trip to avoid the heat, and all looked tired and weary with their long pull from Apia, and the song with which they timed their paddles sounded mournfully across the lagoon. A half-grown girl leaped into the water and hastened up to the store with something fastened in a banana-leaf.

It was a letter, which she shyly handed the trader. Walter Kinross looked at it with surprise, for it was the first he had received in four years, and the sight of its English stamp and familiar handwriting filled him with something like awe.

"The white man said you would give us a tin of salmon and six *masi*," said the little girl, in native.

Kinross unlocked the dingy trade-room, still in a maze of wonder and impatience, and gave the little girl a box of matches in excess of postage. Then he opened the letter.

MY DEAR NEPHEW [it ran]: Your letter asking me to send you a book or two or any old papers I might happen to have about me has just come to hand, and finds me at Long's

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Hotel, pretty miserable and ill. Yours was a strange note, after a silence of eight years, telling me nothing on earth about yourself save that you are trading in some islands, and seldom see a white face from one year's end to another. When a man is seventy years of age and is ill, and his nigh-spent life unrolls before him like the pages of a musty old book, and when he wonders a little how it will feel to be dead and done with altogether, I tell you, my boy, he begins to see the spectres of all sorts of old misdeeds rising before him. Past unkindnesses, past neglects, a cold word here, a ten-pound note saved there and an old friend turned empty away—well, well! Without actually going the length of saying that I was either unkind or negligent in your case, I feel sometimes I was rather hard on you as to that mess of yours in London, and that affair at Lowestoft the same year. I was disappointed, and I showed it.

I know you're pretty old to come back and start life afresh here, but if you have not had the unmitigated folly to get married out there and tied by the leg for ever, I'll help you to make a new start. You sha'n't starve if three hundred pounds a year will keep you, and if you will try and turn over a new leaf and make a man of yourself in good earnest, I am prepared to mark you down substantially in my will. But mind—no promises—payment strictly by results. You're no longer a boy, and this is probably the last chance you'll ever get of entering civilised life again and meeting respectable folk. I inclose you a draft at sight on Sydney, New South Wales, for two hundred and fifty pounds, for you will doubtless need clothes, etc., as well as your passage money, and if you decide not to return you can accept it as a present from your old uncle. I have told Jones (you would scarcely know the old fellow, Walter, he's so changed) to send you a bundle of books and illustrated papers, which I hope will amuse you more than they seem to do me.

Affectionately yours,

ALFRED BANNOCK.

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The trader read the letter with extraordinary attention, though the drift of it was at first almost beyond him—read it and re-read it, dazed and overcome, scarcely realising his good fortune. He spread out the bill on his knee and smoothed it as he might have patted the head of a dog. It spelled freedom, friends, the life he had been trained and fitted to lead, a future worth having and worth dividing. The elation of it all tingled in his veins, and he felt like singing. London, the far distant, the inaccessible, now hummed in his ears. He saw the eddying, crowded streets, the emptying play-houses, the grey river sparkling with lights. The smoke of a native oven thrilled him with memories of the underground, and he had but to close his eyes and the surf thundered with the noise of arriving trains.

The house could not contain him and his eager thoughts; he must needs feel the sky overhead and the trades against his cheek, and take all nature into his puny confidence. Besides, Vaiala had now a new charm for him, one he had never counted on to find. Soon, now, it would begin to melt into the irrevocable past; its mist-swept mountains, its forests and roaring waterfalls would fade into nothingness and become no more than an impalpable phantom of his mind, the stuff that dreams are made of. He wandered along the path from one settlement to another, round the great half-moon of the bay, absorbing every impression with a new and tender interest.

There were a dozen little villages to be passed before he could attain the rocky promontory that barred

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the western shore, pretty hamlets in groves of coconuts and breadfruit, in each perhaps a dozen beehive houses and as many sheds and boat-shelters. Between village and village the path led him under rustling palms and beside the shallow waters of the lagoon and across a river where he surprised some laughing girls at their bath. In the deep shade old men were mending nets, and children were playing tag and cricket with boisterous shouts, or marbles in sandy places. From one house he heard the clapping hands that announced the *'ava* ; in another the song and stamp of practising dancers. Hard and lonely though his life had been, this Samoan bay was endeared to him by a thousand pleasant memories and even by the recollection of his past unhappiness. Here he had found peace and love, freedom from taskmasters, scenes more beautiful than any picture, and, not least, a sufficiency to eat. A little money and his life might have been tolerable, even happy—enough money for a good-sized boat, a cow or two, and those six acres of the Pascoe estate he had so often longed to buy. Only the month before, the American consul had offered them for two hundred dollars Chile money, and here he was with two hundred and fifty pounds in his pocket, seventeen hundred and fifty dollars currency ! Cruel fate, that had made him in one turn of her wrist far too rich to care. He would buy them for Leata, he supposed ; he must leave the girl some land to live on. But where now were all the day-dreams of the laying out of his little estate ?—the damming of the noisy stream, the fen-

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cing, terracing, and path-making he had had in mind; the mangoes, oranges, and avocados he had meant to plant in that teeming soil, with coffee enough for a modest reserve? What a snug, cosy garden a man could make of it! What a satisfaction it might have been! How often had he talked of it with Leata, who had been no less eager than himself to harness their quarter-acre to the six and make of them all a little paradise.

Poor Leata! whom he had taken so lightly from her father's house and paid for in gunpowder and kegs of beef—his smiling, soft-eyed Leata, who would have died for him! What was to become of her in this new arrangement of things? The six acres would provide for her, of course; in breadfruit, cocoanuts, and bananas she would not be badly off: but where was the solace for the ache in her heart, for her desolation and abandonment? He sighed as he thought of her, the truest friend he had found in all his wanderings. He would get her some jewellery from Apia, and a chest of new dresses, and a big musical box, if she fancied it. What would it matter if he did go home in the steerage? It would be no hardship to a man like him. She would soon forget him, no doubt, and take up with somebody else, and live happily ever afterwards in the six acres. Ah, well! he must n't think too much about her, or it would take the edge off his high spirits and spoil the happiest day of his life.

By this time he had worked quite round the bay, and almost without knowing it he found himself in front of Paul Engelbert's store. Engelbert was the other

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trader in Vaiala—a passionate, middle-aged Prussian, who had been a good friend of his before those seven breadfruit-trees had come between them. In his new-found affluence and consequent good humour the bitterness of that old feud suddenly passed away. He recalled Engelbert's rough, jovial kindness—remembered how Paul had cared for him through the fever, and helped him afterwards with money and trade. How could he have been so petty as to make a quarrel of those breadfruit-trees? He recollected, with indescribable wonder at himself, that he had once drawn a pistol on the old fellow, and all this over six feet of boundary and seven gnawed breadfruits! By Jove! he could afford to be generous and hold out the right hand of friendship. Poor old Paul! it was a shame they had not spoken these two years.

On the verandah, barefoot and in striped pyjamas, was Engelbert, pretending not to see him. Kinross thought he looked old and sick and not a little changed.

“How do you do, Engelbert?” he said.

The German looked at him with smouldering eyes.

“Gan't you see I 'm busy?” he said.

“You might offer a man a chair,” said Kinross, seating himself on the tool-chest.

“Dere iss no jare for dem dat iss n't welcome,” said the German.

“I used to be welcome here,” said Kinross. “There was a time when you were a precious good friend of mine, Paul Engelbert.”

“Dat wass long ago,” said the trader.

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"I 've been thinking," said Kinross, "that I 've acted like a damned fool about those trees."

"Dat wass what I wass dinking, too, dese two dree years," responded the other.

"Take them; they are yours," said Kinross. "You can build your fence there to-morrow."

"So!" said Engelbert, with dawning intelligence. "The Yerman gonsul has at last to my gomplaint listened."

"Hang the German consul! No!" cried Kinross. "I do it myself, because I was wrong—because you were good to me that time I was sick, and lent me the hundred dollars and the trade."

"And you want noding?" asked Engelbert, still incredulous.

"I want to shake your hand and be friends again, old man," said Kinross, "same as we used to be when we played dominoes every night, and you 'd tell me about the Austrian War, and how the Prince divided his cigars with you when you were wounded."

The German looked away. "Oh, Kinross," he said, with a shining look in his eyes, "you make me much ashamed." He turned suddenly round and wrung the Englishman's hand in an iron grasp. "I, too, was dam fool."

"A friend is worth more than seven breadfruits," said Kinross.

"It wass not breadfruid: it wass brincible," said the German. "Poof! de drees dey are noding; here it wass I wass hurted," and he laid a heavy paw against his breast. "Ho, Malia, de beer!"

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His strapping native wife appeared with bottles and mugs; at the sight of their guest she could scarcely conceal her surprise.

"Prosit!" said Engelbert, touching glasses.

"You know dem six agers of de Pasgoe estate," he said, looking very hard at his companion. "Very nice leetle place, very sheap, yoost behind your store?"

Kinross nodded, but his face fell in spite of himself.

"I from the American gonsul bought him," went on the German, "very sheap: two hundred dollars Chile money."

Kinross looked black. Engelbert patted his hand and smiled ambiguously.

"Dey are yours," he said. "Pay me back when you have de money. I buy dem only to spite you. *My friend*, take dem."

"Paul, Paul," cried Kinross, "I don't know what to say—how to thank you. Only this morning I got money from home, and the first thing I meant to do was to buy them."

"All de better," said Engelbert; "and, my boy, you blant goffee. Cobrah, poof! Gotton, poof! It's de goffee dat bays, and I will get you blenty leetle drees from my friend, de gaptain in Utumabu Blantation. You must go? So? Yoost one glass beer. Nein? I will be round lader."

Kinross tore himself away with difficulty and started homeward, his heart swelling with kindness for the old Prussian. He exulted in the six acres he had so nearly lost, and they now seemed to him more precious than ever. It was no empty promise, that of the

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coffee-trees from Utumapu; these would save him all manner of preparatory labor and put his little plantation six months ahead. Then he remembered he was leaving Vaiala, and again he heard the hum of London in his ears. Well, he would explain about the trees to Leata, and would beg old Engelbert to help and advise her a bit. Poor Leata! she had lots of good sense and was very quick to learn. He could trust Leata.

He was crossing the *malae*, or common, of Polapola, when the sight of the chief's house put a new thought into his head. It was Tangaloa's house, and he could see the chief himself bulking dimly in the shadow of a *siapo*. Tangaloa! He had n't spoken with him in a year. The old fellow had been good to him, and in the beginning had overwhelmed him with kindnesses. But that was before he had shot the chief's dog and brought about the feud that had existed between them for so long. It was annoying to have that everlasting dog on his verandah at night, frightening Leata to death and spilling the improvised larder all about the floor, not to speak of the chickens it had eaten and the eggs it had sucked. No, he could not blame himself for having shot that beast of a dog! But it had made bad blood between him and Tangaloa, and had cost him, in one way or another, through the loss of the old chief's custom and influence, the value of a thousand chickens. But he would make it up with Tangaloa, for he meant to leave no man's ill will behind him. So he walked deliberately towards the house,

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and slipped under the eaves near the place where the old chief was sitting alone.

"*Talofa*, Tangaloa," he cried out cordially, shaking hands.

The chief responded somewhat drily to the salutation and assumed a vacant expression.

"That dog!" began the trader.

"That dog!" repeated the chief, with counterfeit surprise.

"Thy dog, the one I shot near my house," said Kinross, firing up with the memory of its misdeeds, "the dog that chased my chickens, and ate my eggs, and plagued me all night like a forest devil—I want to take counsel with your Highness about it."

"But it is dead," said Tangaloa.

"But thy high-chief anger is not dead," said Kinross. "Behold, I used to be like your son, and the day was no longer than thy love for me. I am overcome with sorrow to remember the years that are gone, and now to live together as we do in enmity. What is the value of thy dog, that I may pay thee for it, and what present can I make besides that will turn thy heart towards me again?"

"Cease," said the chief; "there was no worth to the dog, and I have no anger against thee, Kinilosi."

"You mock at me, Tangaloa," said Kinross. "There is anger in thine eyes even as thou speakest to me."

"Great was my love for that dog," said the chief. "It licked my face when I lay wounded on the battle-ground. If I whistled it came to me, so

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wise was it and loving; and if I were sick it would not eat."

"Weighty is my shame and pain," said the trader. "Would that I had never lifted my gun against it! But I will pay thee its worth and make thee a present besides."

"Impossible," said Tangaloa. "When the cocoanut is split, who can make it whole?"

"One can always get a new cocoanut," said Kinross. "I will buy thee the best dog in Apia, a high chief of a dog, clever like a consul, and with a bark melodious as a musical box."

At this Tangaloa laughed for the first time. "And what about thy chickens?" he demanded, "and thy things to eat hung out at night?"

"It can eat all the chickens it likes," returned Kinross, "and I will feed it daily, also, with salt beef and sardines, if that will make us friends again, your Highness."

"Cease, Kinilosì; I am thy friend already," said Tangaloa, extending his hand. "It is forgotten about the dog, and lo, the anger is buried."

"And the price?" inquired Kinross.

"One cannot buy friendship or barter loving-kindness," said Tangaloa. "Again I tell thee there is no price. But if thou wouldst care to give me a bottle of kerosene, for the lack of which I am sore distressed these nights—well, I should be very glad."

"I shall be pleased indeed," said the trader, who of a sudden assumed an intent, listening attitude.

"What is the matter?" demanded Tangaloa.

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"Sh-sh!" exclaimed the white man.

"There is nothing," said the chief.

"Yes, yes," said Kinross; "listen, your Highness! A faint, faint bark like that of a spirit dog."

"Oh," said the chief, looking about uneasily.

"Dost thee not hear it?" cried Kinross, incredulously. "To me it is clear like the mission bell, thus: 'Bow-wow-wow-give-also-some-sugar-and-some-tea-and-some-tobacco-to-his-Highness-Tangaloa-bow-wow-wow!'"

The old chief fairly beamed. "Blessed was my dog in life, and blessed in death also!" he cried. "Behold, Kinilosi, he also barks about a few fish-hooks in a bag, and for a small subscription to our new church."

"I think he says fifty cents," said Kinross.

"No, no," cried the chief; "it was like this—quite plain: 'One-dollar-one-dollar!'"

"That ends it," said Kinross. "I must haste to obey the voice of the spirit dog. Good-bye, your Highness."

"Good-bye, Kinilosi," returned the chief, warmly. "I laugh and talk jestingly, but my heart—"

"Mine also," added Kinross, quickly, again grasping the old man's hand.

He strode off with a light step, in a glow of enthusiasm and high spirits. It would be hard to leave the old village, after all. He might travel far and not find hearts more generous or kindly, and he vowed he would never forget his Samoans—no, if he lived a thousand years. And if, after all, the new order of things should fail to please, and he should find him-

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self stifled by the civilisation to which he had been so long a stranger, could he not always return to this little paradise, and live out the number of his days in perennial content? He would search for some savings-bank in London, and place there to his credit a sum large enough to ship him back to the Islands. Whatever the pinch, it should lie there untouched and sacred; and as he toiled in the stern, grey land of his birth, the thought of that secret hoard would always be a comfort to him. But what if the bank should break, as banks do in those centres of the high civilisation, and he should find himself stranded half the world away from the place he loved so dearly? He shivered at the thought. There should be two hoards, in two banks, or else he would feel continually uneasy. The line to the rear must be kept open at any cost.

He found Leata sitting on the floor, spelling out "The Good News from New Guinea" in the missionary magazine. She was fresh from her bath, and her black, damp hair was outspread to the sunshine to dry. She rippled with smiles at his approach, and it seemed to him she had never looked more radiant and engaging. He sat down beside her, and pressed her curly hair against his lips and kissed it. How was it that such a little savage could appear to him more alluring than any white woman he had ever seen? Was he bewitched? He looked at her critically, dispassionately, and marvelled at the perfection of her wild young beauty, marvelled, too, at her elegance and delicacy. And for heart and tenderness, where

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was her match in all the seas? He threw his arm round her and kissed her on the lips.

"Of all things in the world what wouldst thou like the most, Leata?" he asked.

"To have thee always near me, Kinilosi," she answered. "Before, I had no understanding and was like the black people in the missionary book, but now my heart is pained, so full it is with love."

"But there are other things than love," persisted Kinross. "Ear-rings, musical boxes, print for dresses."

"Yes, many things," she said. "But I trouble not myself about them, Kinilosi. But sometimes I think of the land behind our house and the fine plantation we will make there some day."

"But if I gave you a little bag of gold shillings," he said, "and took thee to Apia, my pigeon, what wouldst thou buy?"

"First I would give ten dollars to the new church," she began. "Then for my father I would buy an umbrella, and a shiny bag in which he could carry his cartridges and tobacco when he goes to war. For my mother, also, an umbrella and a picture-book like that of the missionary's, with photographs of Queen Victoria and captains of men-of-war. For my sister a Bible and a hymn-book, and for my brother a little pigeon gun."

"O thou foolish Leata," said Kinross, "and nothing for thyself?"

"There is still more in my bag," she answered, "enough for a golden locket and a golden chain."

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And in the locket there will be your picture and a lock of your hair—like the one the naval officer gave Titi's sister; and when I die, lo, no one shall touch it, for it shall lie on my breast in the grave!”

“To-morrow we shall go to Apia and buy them,” said Kinross. “This morning the pastor brought me a letter from Britain with a present of many dollars. The six acres I have already purchased, and in Apia I shall get prickly wire for fencing, and many things we need for the clearing and planting of the land.”

Leata clapped her hands for joy. “Oh, Kinilosi,” she cried, “it was breaking my heart. I feared the letter would make thee return to the White Country!”

Kinross looked at her with great gentleness. His resolution was taken, be it for good or evil.

“I shall never go back,” he said.

Then in a rousing voice he cried, so loudly that the natives in the neighbouring houses started at the sound: “In Vaiala shall I live, and in Vaiala die!”

FATHER ZOSIMUS

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MANY years ago, before the steamers came to Samoa, when the whites depended on sailing-ships for their precarious supplies and their meagre news of the outside world, the Rev. Wesley Cook reached the Islands to take up the Lord's work in that troubled field. He was a good-looking young man with a weak chin, rather regular features, and an abundance of yellow, fluffy hair, who had trod since earliest infancy the narrow path that leads to a missionary career. An assiduous church-member, a devout Sunday-school scholar, he had climbed, rung by rung, the religious ladder, and his sanguine, sensitive nature had flowered in an atmosphere which would have stifled a bolder boy. At nineteen he was fed into a sectarian college like corn into a mill, and at twenty-two the machine turned him out into the world, an undistinguishable unit of the church to which he belonged. Then, after a quiet month with his old mother, whose heart overflowed with the measure of her son's success, the Rev. Wesley was bidden to marry and depart.

There were plenty to advise him at this juncture, and half a dozen young ladies were entered, so to speak, for the matrimonial steeplechase. But Wesley, contrary to all expectation and not a little to the

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chagrin of the narrow set in which he moved, showed some determination to have his own way in this important matter, and after a brief courtship he carried Miss Minnie Chandler to the altar. She was the proud and defiant beauty of the town, the self-willed, high-spirited young woman whose name was in every mouth, and whose rejected suitors numbered half the bachelors in the neighbourhood. Many wondered at her choice, until it was whispered about that she was heartsick over her affair with Harry Jardine, the manufacturer's son, and that she preferred the missionary wilds to life in the same country with the man who had broken his troth. Be that as it may, she was joined to Wesley Cook in the bonds of holy matrimony, and after a quiet wedding, at which the breakfast was frugal and prayer abundant, the young couple bade farewell to their relations and departed for the uttermost isles of the sea.

Six months later the *Morning Star* hove to off the iron-bound coast of Savai'i, and her surf-boats landed the Rev. Wesley on the shores of his new home, together with a ton of provisions, some cheap furniture, a box of theological books, and a Samoan grammar. He found a concrete house already prepared for him, a church with sand-bagged windows and a plank door still studded with bullets,—an alarming reminder of the unsettled state of his district,—and an obsequious band of church elders, sticky with oil, and, to his notion of things, almost naked in their kilts of paper cloth. Bewildered and unhappy, with his wife in tears beside him, he gazed despairingly at the

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fast-dwindling ship, which he could not hope to see again for the space of a year.

The natives hung about like flies, buzzing through the stuffy rooms of the old mission-house so long closed to their little world, or bestirred themselves with noisy good will to the task of bringing up the freight and the pastor's scanty boxes. He, poor fellow, with haggard face and eyes smarting with sweat, checked off the tally on an envelope, and strove to bear himself like the picture of the martyr Williams in "The Heroes of the Cross." Numberless old men shook him by the hand, and talked to him loudly as though he were deaf, or drew him off to a distance and, leaning on long sticks, barked orations at his head. Bands of youths staggered in, singing, with loads of squealing pigs, and unsavoury victuals in baskets, while shaven-headed children tied chickens to the verandah-posts, and women and girls unfolded offerings of prawns and snaky eels. There was a live turtle in the sitting-room, a bull-calf in the kitchen, and at every turn veritable mountains of half-roasted pork. It was a wild scene for a man new come from quiet England, and the long, even days of life at sea; the unceasing press and bustle of the multitude, the squawking of chickens, and the screams of fettered pigs, all wore on his nerves until his head was giddy and his pulse throbbing. It was late in the afternoon before the mob scampered off with the suddenness and decision of a flock of birds, leaving the missionary and his wife to the peace they so sorely needed. The poor exiles, with sinking hearts, brewed their tea

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beside a packing-case, and wondered (much in the spirit of convicts who have left another world beyond the prison door) whether the captain had won his philopena of Mrs. McDougall, or if Miss Mossby had made it up with young Sturgis.

A year later the new missionary found himself somewhat at home in Fangaloo. He had preached a halting sermon in the native tongue, which, though no one could understand it, had evoked a respectful admiration. The school was now on its feet, and the children came eagerly, seemingly pleased with the rudiments of learning he managed to teach them. His parishioners, too, began to give evidence of their finer and nobler qualities, and warmed his heart by their kindness, generosity, and intelligence. Their laborious talks, as they sat at night round the fires, or on mats beneath the tropic moon, revealed to him a tenderness and refinement he was little prepared to find; and, from a task, these gatherings became an entertainment to be prepared for by anxious study of the phrase-book, and bewildering consultations with an old man who was supposed to understand English. Cook liked the admiration and deference of these ragged chiefs; he loved to note the bustle that heralded his own approach; the shaking out of the finest mats for his special seat; the polite chorus of "*Maliu mai, susu mai Tutumanaia*" ("You are high chief come, Cook the Handsome"); the closing up of the ranks, and the row of expectant faces. He was the little god of Fangaloo Bay, and in a hesitating, humble way he began to taste the sweets of power and authority.

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But with his wife it was very different. Her beautiful face grew pale and sharp, as the days rolled on in a blank succession of household tasks begun and ended. In the long night hours, when the heat made sleep impossible, and her heart turned to England and those dear ones she could not hope to see again for years, she would abandon herself to despair. She never complained, but went about her duties with sad-eyed patience, mixing very little with the many servants provided for her—the young men who studied for the ministry in the intervals of bread-making and waiting at table, and the girls of rank whose fathers were eager for them to keep pace with the strange new times they lived in. She never chid them, as most missionaries' wives would have done, for trifling faults or petty forgetfulnesses. She never realised the enormity of breaking a plate, or the crime of tinting the pudding with washing-blue to enrich the colour; she allowed things to take their untroubled course in a way that amazed her household. When one's heart is slowly breaking, it is hard to count the sugar in the bowl or watch the soap with housewifely care. In the hot afternoons she would take her work and seek the shadow of a tall cocoanut-grove which stood on a hill behind the town, and there remain for hours, gazing out at the vast shining bosom of the ocean, or at the blue mountains of Upolu, far across the strait. So regular was her visit to this little grove that her boys built a bench of *tamanu* wood for her to sit on, and raised a roof overhead to protect her from passing showers or the glancing rays of

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the sun; and the place was called "*o le Nofoali'i o Misi Mini*," or the Throne of Mrs. Minnie, which name it bears to the present day, though all the actors in this story have long been laid beneath the sod. Once, after a solitary vigil of more than usual length, she returned and sought her room, now a little sanctuary of her irrevocable life; for here were gathered the treasures of her past; the photographs, mementoes, and keepsakes that she had clung to in her exile. Here she breathed again the air of home; here she could caress the fading photographs that were so dear to her, and indulge unstinted in passionate rebellion against her fate. On the day of which we write she found no comfort in her shrine. The faces of her friends looked down mournfully at her from the walls, tormenting her with a thousand recollections. Existence was unbearable enough without such added bitterness. These things, inanimate though they were, devoured her while they pretended to comfort; they broke her heart while she looked to them for solace. For a moment she saw the truth and trembled for herself. Madness lay on the road she had begun to follow.

One by one, she gathered them together; the picture of her father and mother, the photographs of her relations and girl friends, old Christmas cards, bits of ribbon, little odds and ends that had played each a part in those bygone days. There were letters, too, precious bundles of letters tied with ribbon, which she kissed and cried over before consigning to destruction; and from one such packet dropped the

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likeness of a man in uniform, which she pressed to her breast before tearing it into a hundred pieces. When at last the room was stripped of everything, she bore the heap of tender rubbish to the fire, and, with a stony face, fed it to the flames.

The Rev. Wesley Cook and his wife were not the only whites in their corner of Savai'i, as indeed they had first imagined themselves to be. There was still another in Fangaloo, an old, white-haired Irish priest called Father Zosimus. No one could remember how many years had passed since Father Zosimus came to Fangaloo and built the tiny house and chapel in the mango-grove; for he was an old, old man, and had come to that sleepy hollow when his hair was as black and his feet were as light as those of the nimblest warrior of the bay. He had no followers to speak of, for Fangaloo was Protestant to the core, and his congregation numbered no more than one family of eight, three transient young men who had run away with as many girls from Upolu, and Filipo, the aged catechist, who acted as his servant. But Father Zosimus never faltered in the path he had set himself to follow. For seven and forty years he had daily broken the stillness of the grove with the tinkle of his little bell, and never failed to carry on the service of his church. He scarcely heeded the new arrivals, and more than once he had had to chide old Filipo for gossiping about the *papa-langi* on the hill. He never gave them a second thought, in fact, until one day he happened to see Tutumanaia passing on his way to church. The sight of that fresh,

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clear-eyed youngster greatly moved the old priest. He was troubled and uneasy as he walked home, and his heart ached a little. The new missionary belonged to his own race; he had the air of a scholar, and the frank, open face and quick eyes of a man full of enthusiasms and generous impulses; yet, so mused Zosimus on his homeward way, this charity, this noble purpose, were all for the aborigines alone. There would be none to spare for an old man to whom no music was so sweet as his mother-tongue, and whose loneliness was intensified by the burden of advancing years. For nearly half a century Father Zosimus had lived in exile, and his soul continually thirsted for the companionship which had been denied him all his life. The few whites who had come his way before had been scrubby traders, a priest or two a year, or some nondescript beach-comber, rough and foul-mouthed, begging brandy and food. True, he had spent eighteen years within a furlong of the Rev. Josiah Fison, Cook's predecessor in Fangaloo; but that gentleman's Christian charity stopped short at what he called a "rank Jesuit," and they had never exchanged even so much as a word. In Father Zosimus there was a strain of Irish gaiety; he loved talk, and laughter, and argument; and the humblest white man who could speak English was welcomed to his table and treated to the best that Fangaloo afforded. Indeed, among the "squires of Savai'i" he was honoured and respected, from Falealupo to the strait. But these men were, most of them, gross and common. In Wesley Cook he saw a being of another

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world, a young man of refinement and spirituality, a fellow-missionary, a fellow-countryman, with whom all intercourse was inexorably barred, with whom he should live out the balance of his days and know no more than if an ocean rolled between them. No longer did he stem the tide of old Filipo's gossip; on the contrary, he could now never learn enough of the new arrivals, and little passed in the mission-house that was not reported to him at once. He learned, with a singular feeling of delight, of the young minister's kindness and ability; how he had mastered the language in less time than a foreigner had been ever before known to take; how he had raised the dying, nay, the breathless dead themselves, back to life with the costly medicines he never stinted to the poorest. "Oh, he is a minister wise and good," said Filipo, "and his heart is not stony against us Catholics like the last pig-face; only yesterday he said that thou, Zosimus, wert honourable, and deserving of respect as a man who had trod the narrow road his whole life long."

The old priest hung upon his words as though Filipo were inspired. The next day he went purposely out of his way to gain another look at Tutumanaia, and came back more affected than he had been before.

"Had I not entered the priesthood, I might have had a son like that," he mused to himself, as he trudged homeward. "But that I gave to God, scarce knowing the sacrifice." Then he rebuked himself for his impiety.

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More than once, as time passed, he turned over in his mind the possibility of calling at the Protestant mission. But no young girl could have shown more timidity than Father Zosimus. Many a time he brought out his best cassock, and brushed his best hat, and took a long look at himself in the cracked shaving-glass. But he would sigh as he saw the image of that wrinkled, shaggy-haired old man. "You 're nothing but a frowsy old frump, Zosimus," he would say to himself, "nothing but the husk of what was once a man. Sure, they would have little use for you, that handsome boy and girl in their elegant home." For to Father Zosimus the whitewashed, coral-built mission-house, with its shining windows and its trim garden laid out in plots, was a fairy palace resplendent with luxury and filled with a thousand treasures. In his simple heart, half prepared as it was to believe anything that redounded to the honour of his hero, he had received with all confidence the glowing tales the natives brought him; and the very glamour with which his imagination endowed the spot helped to keep him back. "If the boy cares to know me, he will come himself," he said; and the camphor-wood chest would close, perhaps for the twentieth time, on the father's Sunday best.

But the boy never came. He, too, was timid, and though he often noticed the gaunt old priest, and longed also to speak his mother-tongue with the only creature save his wife who could understand it in all Fangaloo, the opportunity never came to break the ice. A whole year passed, and the Rev. Wesley Cook

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and the Rev. Father Zosimus, S. J., were no nearer an acquaintance than before. Yet there was seldom a day but they saw each other from afar, the one shy and kind, half hoping to receive the first advances, the other no less eager and no less restrained.

One day Filipo brought a rumour to his master which the latter listened to with deep concern. For a whole afternoon he gave up his usual digging in the garden and paced his little verandah to and fro. Once he even washed and dressed himself in his best, and trimmed his ragged beard; but he took off his clothes again and smoked another pipe instead of paying the visit he had so nearly decided to make. He called in Filipo from the taro-field, and bade him waylay Misi's girls every day and bring news of Mrs. Cook's condition.

Day by day the two old men discussed the coming event, and Father Zosimus grew by turns glad and fearful at the prospect. The news came to him one morning in October, as he was kneeling to implore divine aid in the hour of a woman's agony. Dawn was breaking as Filipo rushed into the chapel, coughing and panting. "It is all over," he cried,—“the mother well and happy, and the child a little chief, of a strength and beauty the like of which has never been seen in Fangaloa.”

“God be thanked!” cried Father Zosimus, throwing himself once more on his knees.

With the later hours there came less assuring news of the mother and the little chief. There was a devil in Misi, said Filipo; a devil that caused her to lie as

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dead, or to burst forth furiously into strange tongues, so that all about her stood amazed and trembling. The little chief lay helpless in old Sisimaile's arms, and the flame of its tiny life was that of a flickering torch. Yes, the *papatisonga* had not been neglected. Old Tuisunga and Leotele, the speaking-man, were the godfathers at the font; and Tutumanaia read fast, with tears in his voice, lest the babe should die before it had been joined to the Tahitian religion. For Master Wesley Chandler Cook was not destined long to be a member of Christ's church on earth. As they bore him back to the room where his mother lay, he closed his eyes for ever.

Father Zosimus was stunned when the news first reached him, and the tears rolled down his cheeks as he listened to Filipino. Then he went indoors and rummaged the old chests where he kept his treasures, turning out some trashy velvet with which he had meant to decorate the chapel, a bottle of varnish, some brass nails, and a bundle of well-seasoned, well-polished *maalava* boards that he had laid away to build himself a desk. He spread them out on the rough table, and studied them long and earnestly. In his youth he had been a joiner and a worker in wood, and though his hand was palsied with age, and his eye not so true as it once had been, he was still more than a fair craftsman. He brought out his tools, clamps, and measures, and asked Filipino what he judged to be the bigness of the chief-son of Tutumanaia.

"Not very long," said the old retainer,—"scarcely more than the half of your Highness's arm."

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Father Zosimus put on his spectacles, measured off the velvet, scanned his materials and tools with a workmanlike eye, and then, when all lay ready to his hand, he went outside and began to pace up and down his verandah. The devil of irresolution and doubt was again gnawing at his heart. Unsought and unasked, what business was it of his to make a coffin for the dead child? There was not a soul in Fangaloa but knew that Father Zosimus was skilled in such matters, as his house and chapel so abundantly testified. Were his help required, they would come and seek it. Would it not look strange for him to make a coffin unbidden? Would it not appear forward, grasping, perhaps as though he expected payment for his work? For an hour he wrestled with the problem. Finally he told Filipo to spread the news about the village that the old priest looked to undertake this task for nothing, and was waiting only to be asked. With that he shut himself up in the chapel, and spent the forenoon in reciting prayers for the dead. But, devout though he ordinarily was in everything touching the services of his church, Father Zosimus found it hard, on this occasion, to dwell on things heavenly when all the while his body was quivering with suspense, and his soul hearkened for that footfall on the coral floor. Again and again he seemed to hear the sound of voices, Filipo answering with soft deliberation, the minister agitated and saying with mournful earnestness, "Tell the *al'vi patele* I must see him instantly." But no message came; no discreet cough or dog-like scratching against the door

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warned him that his attention was desired; and the stillness of the chapel remained untroubled save for the murmuring surf and the coo of wild pigeons in the forest.

It was late in the afternoon, and the fierce heat of day was already melting into the softness of night, when the minister's little son was borne to his rest. Under the equator burial follows swiftly on the heels of death, and life no sooner leaves the body than the diggers must sweat and the hammers fly. There can be no decorous pause to soften the blow or strengthen the bereaved for that last farewell beside the grave. Ashamed, he knew not why, with a desolate sense of defeat, Father Zosimus was drawn to gaze on the burial from afar, crouching on a knoll that overlooked the spot. He watched, with an emotion not to be expressed in words, the affecting scene which played itself out before him. Across the strait blue Upolu sparkled in the setting sun; the foaming breakers outlined the coast like a fringe of silver, and thrilled faintly on the ear; the evening star quivered in the blackening sky, and the constellation of the Southern Cross gleamed in the heavens, the bright solace of many a Christian heart.

The coffin lay on a rough bier of mingled boughs and flowers, borne in procession by eight solemn little boys all of a size, who were tricked out in a uniform of white cotton. Behind them, very pale and handsome, walked Tutumanaia, in duck clothes and a pith helmet. On his one hand was the smug-faced native pastor from the next bay; on the other,

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Tuisunga, the towering old chief, imperious of eye, stately in manner, as befitted the occasion and the man. Behind these again, and at the head of the elders and speaking-men with their fly-flappers and Bibles, strode the *taupou* of Fangaloo, in a striped silk *apana* and a skirt made of a fine mat. The village matrons made up the middle of the procession, with their hands full of hibiscus, frangipani, stephanotis, and *moso'oi*, followed by groups of young girls and young men, decorously apart, as convention demands; the former in bright *lavalavas* and little shirts of flowers and leaves, or with their brown bosoms glistening through entwined *laumaile* and necklaces of scarlet *singano*; the latter with lime-whitened heads and flaming *aute*-blossoms behind their ears. Throughout swarmed the village children, with shaven heads and eager faces, and ears all unmindful of the click-click of their warning parents, romping, quarrelling, and chasing one another through the crowd.

The pall-bearers laid down their burden beside the empty grave, and knelt on the grass in a little semicircle. Tutumanaia and his two companions threw themselves on a mat which a woman unrolled and spread out for them. The *taupou* took her position at the head of the coffin, and raised her silken parasol, less to shade her eyes than to display a cherished possession. At a respectful distance, the chiefs, elders, and speaking-men formed the first rank of a great circle, their deeply lined faces overcast and solemn. The silence was first broken by a shrill hymn,

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and then Cook rose to his feet, drew a Testament from his pocket, and began to address the village. What he said was commonplace enough, and only the echo of what he had said a hundred times before, but the stress of a deep emotion ennobled his ready phrases and impassioned the narrow vocabulary of Samoan woe. It seemed to Father Zosimus that he was listening to an angel, or to one of those inspired beings on whom the church is founded; and, indeed, a painter would have found a saint to his hand in the tall, shining white figure of the young minister, with his aureole of golden hair, his hand uplifted to the sky, and his pale, rapt face raised to God.

He faltered as he drew near the close of his address, and when at last he looked down and pointed to the little coffin, the stream of his eloquence suddenly ran dry. He tried to go on, hesitated, and covered his face with his hands, leaving it for the pastor to continue. This the Rev. Tavita Singua did without further loss of time. He expatiated on the godlike virtues of Tutumanaia in a strain that would have made an angel blush, and did not spare the poor clay that had lived but to die. Another piercing hymn preceded the third address. Old Tuisunga now stepped forward, his battle-scarred chest naked to the heavens, the bunching tapa round his loins his only garment. Slowly, softly, with the tenderest deliberation, he began to speak. He was a born orator, and knew the way to men's hearts, rugged old barbarian though he was. His theme was the bond that this

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little grave would for ever be between the missionary and themselves, and his voice thrilled as he invited Wesley into the fellowship of the bereaved, and told of the tragedy that underlies the life of man. He drew familiar instances from the village history; here a cherished boy destined for a name renowned; there a young maid struck down in all her bright promise. He called to mind his own son Rafael, who had fallen beside him on the battle-field, his Absalom, for whom he would have died a thousand deaths. He spoke, he said, as one man of sorrow to another, one whose heart lay beneath a fathom of Samoan earth. He drew to a close by declaring that no common hand should touch the coffin of their beloved. He, the son of chiefs, the father of famous warriors, would lay the little body to its last repose, so that it should say when its spirit reached the angels, "Behold, I am the son of Tutumanaia, and my servant Tuisunga laid me to rest in the house of sandalwood." He tenderly lifted the coffin in his arms, pressed his lips against the unpainted boards, and lowered it into the grave.

An hour later, a gaunt, black-robed figure made its way through the trampled grass and fell on its knees beside the grave. It was Father Zosimus, bowed in supplication before the throne of grace.

It was strange what a simple matter at last brought about the acquaintance of the only two white men in Fangaloo. Each had timidly waited for the other to make the first advances, and each had gone his solitary

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way, sick at heart, and hungering for the companionship which would have been so eagerly accorded. It befell that Cook's well went dry, and there being no other water in the village save the brackish fluid the natives were content to drink, one of the mission boys suggested that they apply to the old priest. So Tutu-manaia sat down and wrote a polite note, explaining his predicament, and begging for a little water. The note was sent by a messenger with a bucket. Father Zosimus was overwhelmed when he opened and read the letter; he was dazed by the suddenness of his own good fortune; he bade Filipo feed the boy with the best the house afforded, with sucking pig and *palusami* unstinted, while he hurriedly made ready for the visit that he was at last to pay.

Oh, that first meeting! It exceeded his wildest expectations, his most sanguine dream! Wesley Cook was so cordial, so frankly anxious to be friends, so overflowing with pent-up confidences, that the priest almost wept as he unbosomed himself of the scruples that had kept him back. With innocent craft, he left nothing undone to establish his footing, and his bland and beaming smile hid a thousand schemes for entangling Cook in a web of obligation. Could he send some roses to madam, his beautiful wife? It might distract her from the thought of her terrible loss. He had so many roses—to give a few would be such a pleasure, such an honour. Ah, madam would be pleased with them, were she fond of flowers. She, too, must come and see his garden, his poor garden, where he grudged not the labour,

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as it seemed to bring him close to God. Could he not provide her with some special seeds sent him all the way from Ceylon—acclimated seeds from the famous gardens of the lay brothers at Point de Galle? Some guava jelly of his own making? Some smoked pigeons that he ventured to say were delicious? Would Cook accept some cherries in brandy that the captain of the *Wild Cat* had presented to him years ago—that headstrong naval captain who had come to bombard Fangaloa, and ended by giving prizes to the school-children?

Father Zosimus did not overstay his welcome. On the contrary, he had to tear himself away almost by force, so insistent was Cook to keep him. But he knew how much depended on that first visit; he would not jeopardise the precious friendship by remaining too long; and he took early leave, exulting like a child in the rosy vistas that opened before him. This proved to be the first of many visits, and the beginning of an acquaintance that ripened into the closest intimacy. In the day each had his duties to perform, his quiet routine of tasks to fulfil. Father Zosimus sawed stone for the unfinished church he had been ten years building with the perseverance of an ant, or dug in the garden hard by the chapel whose tinkling bell called him periodically to devotions. Tutumanaia had his school, his Young Men's Institute, his medical practice, and the thousand and one labours imposed upon him by his position and the multitude of his flock. One hour daily he devoted to the intricacies of the language, another

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to the translation of the "Peep o' Day" and "Glimpses of the Holy Land" into the Samoan tongue. But at night, when all the village lay quiet on its mats, and nothing broke the stillness save the drone of the surf and the rustle of flying-foxes among the trees, then it was that Father Zosimus would seek the mission verandah and the society of the friend that had become so dear to him.

Side by side, with their canvas chairs touching, the strange pair would talk far into the night. The world passed in review before them, that great world of which they both knew so little; and from their village on the shores of an uncharted sea they weighed and examined, criticised and condemned it. Or perhaps from such lofty themes their talk would drift into the homelier channel of local gossip, or stray into the labyrinths of Samoan politics. Or Origen, Athanasius, George of Cappadocia, would be drawn from their distant past to point an argument or illustrate a deep dissertation on the primitive church. And from these, again, perhaps to Steinberger's new poll-tax and the fighting in Pango Pango.

On one subject they never spoke—the great barrier reef of dogma that lay between them. Once only was it in any way alluded to—once after a memorable night when Wesley had opened his heart to the old priest. In saying farewell the latter had raised his hands, and was deeply chagrined when his companion leaped back with a look of consternation.

"Oh, my son," said Zosimus, "the blessing of an

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old and not unworthy man cannot harm thee. Do we not each serve God according to our lights?"

But if Father Zosimus had succeeded in winning the young minister's confidence and friendship, with Mrs. Cook he had not fared so well. In the bottom of his heart he felt that the woman's ill will was the rock on which the precious friendship might founder, and he accordingly left no stone unturned to ingratiate himself in her favour. But the lonely, wilful, moody woman, with her health impaired by her recent confinement, and her spirit warped by disappointment and the consciousness of dimming beauty, was in no state of mind to receive his advances. Unhappy herself, she was in the tigerish humour when one must rend, if one can, the happiness of others. She had nothing in common with the frowsy old priest who wore blue jeans under his snuffy cassock and smelled of garden mould. Moreover, her pride was wounded by her tacit exclusion from the nightly company on the porch. Her presence brought constraint and what seemed to her disordered nerves a scarcely veiled resentment. Though she yawned in her husband's face when they were alone together, and did nothing to seek his confidence, she detested his intimacy with the old priest, and the thought of it rankled perpetually within her. At first she had ignored Father Zosimus's very existence, repelling his overtures with an indifference quite unaffected, and treating him with the frank rudeness that springs from unconcern. But as time passed, and every fibre of her being revolted at the

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narrowness and hopelessness of her imprisoned life; as her spirit beat against the bars and her heart seemed to burst within her breast; she began to perceive in the priest the means of striking at her husband. Not that she did not love Wesley, after a fashion; if things had so fallen out, she could have felt the most poignant jealousy; but she resented the easy, contented nature that blossomed in that hot hole where they lived, among those greasy, fawning savages with whom their lot was so inexorably cast. His prattle about the school, the progress of the "Peep o' Day," his zeal for unearthing legends and old Samoan songs, his whole innocent enjoyment in his daily tasks and duties, all fanned the flame of her revolt. If he, too, had risen against the dreary confinement of their life; if he, too, had faced each succeeding day with ineffable disgust, and had lain weary and heartsick in her arms at night; she would have comforted him, encouraged him, strengthened him for the task he had so rashly undertaken. What she could not bear, what she could not forgive or condone, was his mild acceptance of his fate; his zest in the pitiful drudgery of his every-day existence; the petty nature that could thus expand in the close air of a prison. With a malignity that was crazed in its intensity, the outcome of hysteria and the first gnawings of disease, she sought to shatter the placidity which had grown as intolerable to her as the Samoan sun at noon. In Father Zosimus she perceived the dagger with which she could stab her husband through and through; and

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in the maturing of her plot she enjoyed the nearest approach to happiness that had ever come her way in Fangaloo.

One evening, when Father Zosimus arrived as usual, he was met on the verandah by Mrs. Cook, and informed that the minister had been detained in the village by some trifling errand. He felt a tone of menace in her voice, and foreboded no good from her high colour and quivering lips. He would have excused himself had a lie come easily to his lips, but he was not quick in such things, and took the offered seat with a sinking heart. He searched nervously here and there for some topic of conversation that might be interesting and yet free from the slightest possibility of offence, his ear, meanwhile, alert for the sound of the minister's footsteps. But Mrs. Cook was too adroit for the old man, and, to his inexpressible chagrin, he soon found himself stumbling into an argument, and the target for humiliating and derisive questions. He now thought only of escape, for his hands were trembling, and he felt his cheeks flushing with indignation. Every word he said seemed only to land him deeper in the mire. When, at last, Mrs. Cook began to taunt him with a recent scandal in Upolu involving the good name of a nun, Father Zosimus cried out inarticulately, and flung himself past her into the darkness. Even as he did so, Wesley Cook came swinging up the path, and instinctively stepped aside to allow the flying figure to pass. He looked back at it irresolutely, and then continued on his way with a premonition of evil to come. His

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wife received him with vehement caresses, clinging to him in an hysterical frenzy. Between her choking sobs she overflowed with foolish, disjointed, and often incoherent accusations against the old priest. "That horrible old Jesuit!" she cried; "that sly, slinking, wicked creature; never, never must he be permitted to cross the threshold again." Her cheeks flamed as she continued her tirade; as she described the shame, the humiliation she had secretly undergone; as she affected, with passionated outbursts of indignation, to keep back things that were too black even for utterance. All the time she searched Wesley's eyes for an answering fire, and could read nothing but incredulity and dismay. Then her wrath turned full upon him, and with a hundred quotations from his own lips she denounced his intimacy with a Jesuit, and bade him choose between the priest and her.

She threatened to seek old Tuisunga's protection were he to persist in this unworthy friendship, and drew in no uncertain colours the effect of the letter she would write to the missionary authorities at Malua. Wesley was frightened to the core, and quaked under the lash of her denunciation. He saw himself disgraced; dismissed from the Society; turned out into the world, that most forlorn and helpless of human beings, the discarded missionary. Abjectly he begged for mercy, simulated an indignation against Father Zosimus he could in no wise feel, and was in due course forgiven on promising to break for ever with the old priest.

He passed a troubled night; he felt he had made a

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mean capitulation, and, try as he would, he was unable to gloss the matter to his conscience. He was stung by the conviction of his cowardice and disloyalty, and yet his common sense told him that he was powerless in his wife's hands. He could never outlive the scandal of her desertion, or explain away those letters which would write him down a pervert. In the morning Wesley timidly expostulated with his wife, quoting all the texts he could remember that bore on charity and forgiveness. This was a course little calculated to allay Mrs. Cook's wrath. She burst out upon him with a fury that completely crushed his last effort at intercession. She stood over him as he wrote the letter in which, with smooth and nicely balanced sentences, interspersed with religious commonplaces and trite expressions of regret, he raised a wall of words between himself and the old man he had called his friend. He knew, he said, that Father Zosimus could have had no intention to offend, but Mrs. Cook had taken the matter of overnight in such a way that he felt unable to resume an intimacy which had been very precious to him. No apologies or explanations could avail, and he begged that none be offered; but he trusted, he need not say how earnestly, that in some future time (D. V.) the dark clouds would roll away, and with them all memories of this unhappy misunderstanding.

The letter was brought to Father Zosimus in the garden, where he was digging furiously to drive away the devils that beset him. He tore it open with his grimy hands, and read it with a feeling of despair.

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The few kindly allusions brought tears to his eyes, and his first resentment against Tutumanaia passed away as he re-read them; but against Mrs. Cook, the author of his humiliation, his whole nature rose in arms. Disciplined though he was by seven and forty years of abnegation, the old Adam in him lay still fiery and untamed. He was consumed with bitterness towards the woman who had so cruelly wronged him. What had he to hope "in some future time (D. V.)," old and broken man that he was? In the fierceness of his indignation he called down the vengeance of God upon her until contrition overpowered him, and he threw himself on his knees.

"Oh, Zosimus," he said, "so old and still so foolish!"

After such a blow it was hard to pick up the threads of life once more, and interest himself in the recurring tasks which rounded out each day. But in Father Zosimus there was the stuff of which martyrs are made. Sore of heart though he was, and spent of body, his unremitting energy and indomitable faith drove him to work and pray as he had never worked or prayed before. His lacerated feelings found an outlet in dazzling garden-beds, trellises of bamboo, and in the stone wall he had so often planned and as often given up, which was to inclose the seaward side of his little plantation. And in these tranquil and unexciting occupations, which kept the hands busy while the mind was free to rove, a certain scheme unfolded itself which found increasing favour in his eyes; the means, in fact, by which

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he might score a triumph over Mrs. Cook, and restore himself once again in her good graces. Not that he had forgiven her for the part she had taken against him ; his anger still smouldered beneath the blanket of Christian charity with which he had sought to smother it ; but were he to gain again his footing in that household on the hill ; were he to renew the intimacy that was the very salt of his life ; he must needs pay toll to the woman who held the key of his happiness. As he dug, or weeded, or carried stones to his wall, or climbed the ladder beside the shining trellis-work, the old priest was never far from a sheet of paper and a pencil. Sometimes it was a hammer that kept these things in place, sometimes it was the well-worn shovel-hat that guarded them from the puffs of the trade or chance cat's-paws from the mountains, while Zosimus, his head economically wrapped in banana-leaves, seized many an occasion during the course of his labours to scribble another word on the anchored sheet, or erase something already written. It was a list of such delicacies as the limited markets of Apia afforded, for which the old man was intending to lay out the savings of a year.

It must not be supposed that the Rev. Wesley Cook was having a particularly pleasant time of it during the days that followed the breaking off with Father Zosimus. For half a week, indeed, his wife exerted herself to supply the old man's place, and had never before shown herself so agreeable or so helpful. She interested herself in Wesley's legends, listened patiently to the story of Sopo's misdoings, of the bril-

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liant possibilities that lay in Popo would he only apply himself in earnest, or lamented with her husband the bad influences which were undermining the character of a gentleman named O; she wrote to his dictation a little essay on the "King-names of Samoa," which Cook intended sending to the Polyneesian Society of New Zealand; and, in fact, proved herself a zealous, clever, and indefatigable comrade. All thought of Father Zosimus would soon have slipped from Wesley's memory had this new-found companionship been destined to endure; but it was nothing more than a flash in the pan, due half to remorse, half to policy, a means to gain time for the breach to widen irrevocably between her husband and the priest.

The sour, capricious woman could not long brook the task she had set herself to perform; her spirit soon flagged in the dull round which made up her husband's life, and her new part in it grew daily more intolerable. She slowly lapsed again into the dark humour which was fast becoming her second nature, and took no further trouble to conciliate her husband. Cook was slow to realise the change, but when at last it dawned upon him that she listened with unconcealed indifference to the tale of the day's doings, and made no further pretence of caring either for his work in Fangalooa or for the literary labours which were his only relaxation, he, too, grew gloomy and dispirited. The essay languished; the "Peep o' Day" stood still; and he spent solitary hours in his study in a kind of stupor. A thousand times his

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heart turned towards his old friend, and he longed to throw himself at his feet and say, "Father, comfort me! I am weak of spirit and sore distressed." But loyalty to the overwrought and nigh crazy woman he called his wife, as well as the timidity which was constitutional in the man, forbade an open reconciliation, and he shrank from the thoughts of a clandestine one. So he went his lonely way, bearing his cross as best he might.

At last the time grew near for the execution of the plan which had cost Father Zosimus so much trouble and calculation, not to speak of many dollars from his scanty hoard.

On Christmas morn, as the cannon at Faleapuni pealed along the shore and roused the villages with its joyful reverberations, Father Zosimus hastened to transform his dwelling into a bower of ferns and flowers. With Filipino to assist him, and 'afa enough to have built a chief's house, the pair worked unceasingly until there remained not an inch without its flower nor a post unentwined with brilliant creepers and fragrant *moso'oi*. He drew a breath of satisfaction when it was all finished to his liking, and while Filipino swept out the litter he sat down and wrote the following letter:

FANGALOA, December 25, 186-.

MY DEAR CHILDREN: On this blessed morning no Christian can harbour any unkindness in his heart, nor cast up another's shortcomings against him. I am an old and a failing man; the day of my release is close at hand, and you both must be generous to me as one so soon to stand before

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his God. And if I have unwittingly offended you,—as I know I have done,—I pray you to forgive me for the sake of Him who was born to-day. I have ventured to prepare a little feast in your honour, with which I hope we may celebrate, in innocent gaiety, the renewal of our friendship. At twelve o'clock I shall expect you both.

I remain, my dear children, with heartfelt wishes for your good health and continued prosperity,

Your old friend,

ZOSIMUS, S. J.

He read the note several times to himself before putting it into an envelope and addressing it to Mr. and Mrs. Cook. Filipino was at hand, garlanded with red *singano* and elegantly garbed in white, prepared to make a good appearance before the young ladies of the mission. He trotted off with the note carefully wrapped in a banana-leaf, that it might be delivered in all its virgin purity. Father Zosimus lit a pipe and impatiently set himself to await his messenger's return.

"*Se'i ave le tusi lea ia Misi,*" said Filipino to the young lady that met him at the door. "*Ou te fa'atali i'inei mo le tali.*" ("Give this letter to Misi. I will wait here for the answer.") Now, in Samoa, the word "Misi" is used to designate and address Protestant missionaries of either sex, and the maid carried the letter, not to Wesley Cook in his study, but to Mrs. Cook, who was listlessly lolling in the sitting-room. She tore it open, read it with attention, and putting it hastily in her pocket, bade the girl send Filipino away. "Tell him Misi says there is no answer," she said.

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The old catechist skipped down the hill, and repeated to his master the message that had been given him.

Father Zosimus was painfully overcome.

"Filipo," he said, "did you see the minister with your very own eyes?"

"*Ioe*," answered the catechist, cheerfully; "he was writing in his room, and I saw him through the window, looking very sad, and eating his pen like a cow at a breadfruit-tree." Filipo mimicked the action on his finger.

Father Zosimus sat for a long time in a kind of dream. A glass of wine served to rouse and strengthen him, and the unaccustomed stimulant put him in some sort of trim to carry on the duties of the day. But a recurring dizziness and a sinking at the heart soon drove him to take an enforced rest. He told Filipo he did not care to eat, bidding him put away the wine, and call Iosefo and his family to the feast that had been made ready for such different guests.

With the passing of Christmas Father Zosimus began to work harder than ever in his garden; early and late he could be seen in the midst of its blooming flower-beds, digging, weeding, or transplanting with passionate intensity. A loutish fellow from the westward, a heavy-featured son of Wallis Island, had been engaged to divide the burden of these tasks, and for a wage infinitesimally small toiled and sweated under the father's eye. To guard this creature from the prattle of the passers-by, and to check his tendency to gaze dreamily into the sun; to stifle his inclination to

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drink, to smoke, to chatter, to explain how much better they did things in Wallis Island; to keep his fat face, in fact, on the weeds in front of him, became, indeed, Father Zosimus's constant study. Day by day, he stood sentinel over his Uvean, applied the man's clumsy force to profitable ends, and kept his own unconquerable heart from breaking.

It was not every day he could pursue the occupation he loved best, and watch his plans take shape with slow but appreciable success. January falls in the depth of the wet season; furious rains and long stretches of boisterous weather often interrupted the Uvean's labours, driving both him and his taskmaster to the enforced idleness of the house—the former to sleep on the floor or to smoke interminable *sulus* with Filipo: the priest to read his breviary by dim lamplight as the deluge pounded on the roof. It was during one of these black days, when all the world was awash outside, and a wild westerly wind was tearing through the trees, bombarding the village with crashing boughs and cocoanuts, that the priest's ancient barometer sank to 29°, and gave a quivering promise of worse to follow. He was looking at the mercury, and setting the gauge, when Filipo appeared in the passage, his face bright with news.

"The partner of Tutumanaia is known to your Highness?" he began, with a question that might well have appeared superfluous.

Father Zosimus turned instantly.

"God is high-chief angry with her rock-like heart," went on Filipo, with the calm intonation of one vin-

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dedicated. "She was presumptuous and beautiful like an angel; now she is pig-faced and torn of devils; and her man, oh, he weeps like an *aitu* in the wilderness."

"Whence didst thou get this *tala*?" asked the priest, mindful of past mare's nests on his servant's part.

"The *tala* is a true one, Zosimus," he said. "Even now the pastor of Faleapuni is praying with a loud voice in the room of the sick, tussling with the devil, while the family shrieks and is distracted. The hand of God lies heavy upon her, and they say she will die; her face scorches the touch like a hot lamp, and she talks constantly the words of devils."

Zosimus made a gesture of annoyance; at any other time he would have reproved Filipo for retailing such heathenish fables, and reopened a discussion that had continued between them for upward of thirty years; but his solicitude for Wesley Cook monopolised every thought, and he allowed his servant's words to pass unchallenged.

"But her sickness?" he demanded. "How first did it come upon her?"

"It was thus," returned Filipo: "thy grieving heart was known of God, and when he looked down at that costly feast to which neither the minister nor his wife would deign to come—"

"Stop!" cried the priest. "This is the talk of an untattooed boy. Have I not told thee a thousand times that sickness has invariably a cause?"

"The maids say that last week she had a long talk with her husband," said Filipo, "and together they

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quarrelled until she talked loud and fierce, like a German, and he cried and cried, and threw himself on the mats. Then she went out of the house, and to her there was neither umbrella nor coat, though it rained; and she walked, uselessly, all the way to Faleapuni, so burned her heart with anger; and when she returned she was trembling with the cold so that her teeth went thus. Then she went to bed, and vomited terribly, and every time she breathed, it hurt her chest so that she said, 'Ugh! ugh!' like a man sorely wounded on the field. Then the minister came to her and tried to talk and bedarling her; but she mocked at him, and said her heart was in the White Country. After that she began to talk the devil-stuttering which is not understandable of man."

Father Zosimus's jaw fell, and he looked about him like a man on the brink of some great resolve.

"She was never the same after the day of the feast," said Filipo.

The priest put on his yellow oilskin, and placing a bottle of brandy in one pocket, he grasped the bunched umbrella that was his inseparable companion. Thus prepared to face the elements and carry succour to the sick, he made his way into the open and ascended the hill towards the mission-house. His face tingled under the lash of the wind and rain as he struggled on, dodging the nuts that occasionally shot across his path like cannon-balls; and when at last he reached his goal in safety, he was surprised to see the curtains pulled down within, and to find no one to answer his repeated knocks.

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He was emboldened to turn the knob and enter, which he did hesitatingly, not knowing what reception awaited him. At the end of the hall a half-open door let out a flood of lamplight, betraying one room, at least, in which he might expect to find some member of the household. On the bed beside the wall Mrs. Cook lay in disordered bedclothes, her glassy eyes upturned in delirium, her face yellow and pinched almost beyond recognition, one thin arm on the pillow beneath her head, the other thrown limply across the sheet. Not far from her, in shabby dressing-gown and slippers, Wesley himself was asleep in a canvas chair, sunk in the deep oblivion that follows an all-night watch. On the floor two native girls slumbered in boluses of matting, their heads side by side on a bamboo pillow. The priest stole softly to the bed and looked down on Mrs. Cook's face; but there was no understanding in the bright, troubled glance that met his own, no coherence in the whispered words she repeated to herself. He was angered to think of his own ignorance and helplessness as he stood the brandy on the littered table beside the copy of "Simple Remedies for the Home," and studied the woman with renewed anxiety. In truth, she looked grievously ill. Sixty miles of wild water and mountainous seas separated them from Apia and the only doctor in the group; he shivered as he caught the wail of the wind without, and saw in mind the breakers that were thundering against their iron coast.

He fell on his knees and prayed, and then went out

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into the air again, his mind made up to a desperate measure. He now took another path, one that led him across the village to Tuisunga's stately house. It was nearly filled with chiefs and speaking-men, ranged round in a great circle, and the high-pitched, measured periods of an orator could be heard above the wind and the pelting rain. On his approach there burst out a chorus of "*Maliu mai, susu mai, ali'i Zosimo*"; and he bent under the eaves and made his way, half crouching, to a place by Tuisunga's side. The eyes of all the party turned on him with surprise, and there was a little burst of expectation, broken only by the embittered hawking of the interrupted orator.

"Your Majesty Tuisunga, chiefs, and speaking-men of Fangaloo," began Zosimus, "be not angry with me for disturbing this meeting. I have just come from the house of mourning, where God's hand lies heavy upon your pastor's wife, so that she is like to die. It is my thought that we take a boat and go with all expedition for the German doctor in Apia."

"Chief Zosimus," answered Tuisunga, "the gentlemen you see before you have been discussing this very matter. We are agreed that if the lady is to live, we must seek help at once from the wise white man in Apia, though the storm is heavy upon us, and the risk more than bullets in the fighting line. But what boat can live in such a gale, save one that is strong indeed, and well wrought? Our man-of-war that pulls forty oars is with Forster to be mended; my own whaler is too old and rotten for so bold a

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malanga ; the others we possess are small and useless."

"There is Ngau's boat," said the priest, with a flash of his eyes towards a sullen-looking old chief. "It is new, and strong like a ship of two masts."

Ngau's withered face hardened. A titter ran round the assembled chiefs.

"That is the knot," said Tuisunga; "it is not the will of Ngau to give his boat, lest it be cast away."

"Not to save the life of a dying woman?" demanded Father Zosimus.

"Ngau is accustomed to the white man's way," said Tuisunga. "He is mean, and his heart is like a stone."

All eyes turned to Ngau, who stared back, defiant and unabashed.

"If he has a white man's heart, we will treat him to the white man's law," cried Zosimus. "We will take his boat by force."

"But it is Ngau's boat," said Tuisunga.

"It is Ngau's boat," echoed the chiefs.

"And thou wilt let the woman die?" cried Father Zosimus.

"It is Ngau's boat," said Tuisunga.

"What dost thou want for the boat?" demanded the priest.

"Five dollars and a tin of biscuit," replied Ngau, promptly; "and if it be wrecked, one hundred and twelve dollars, a water-bottle, and a coil of rope as thick as a man's thumb."

"I will take it on myself," said Father Zosimus.

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"I am poor; I belong to a faith that thou deridest; yet my heart is not weak and fearful like thine. I will answer for thy boat, Chief Ngau, before all these gentlemen as witnesses."

"*O le tino tupe lava* [hard money]" inquired Ngau, "to be put in my hand before the young men touch my boat?"

"I have not so much," cried the priest. "I have not money in my house like drinking-nuts. It comes this month, and that a little at a time. But I tell thee truly, I will pay thee every *seni*."

The owner of the boat shook his head.

"I want one hundred and twelve dollars," he said, "a water-bottle, and a coil of rope as thick as my thumb."

"Why dost thou call thyself chief of this village, Tuisunga?" demanded the priest. "The only chief I see here is Ngau. He speaks: we obey. It matters not what I want, or what thou wishest, or whether the pastor's wife lies dying. It is his Majesty Ngau who is King of Fangaloa. Thy power is no stronger than that of an untattooed boy."

"But it is Ngau's boat," said Tuisunga, looking very black.

"Zosimus," said Ngau, "they tell me thou hast costly things in thy church—cups of silver, two silver candlesticks, each heavy as a gun, and a silver cross on which there is the image of Jesus. Bring these to me, together with five dollars of hard money and the musical box that sounds so sweetly of an evening, and I will hold them for the price of my boat. If it

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be cast, thou shalt pay me, from time to time, one hundred and twelve dollars, a water-bottle, and a coil of rope as thick as a man's thumb, and when the contract is finished I will give thee back the precious things. But if no harm befall the boat, I shall return them at once, and the price of it will be five dollars and a tin of biscuit."

"Thou shalt have them," cried Father Zosimus; "and if thou hadst said, 'Zosimus, take an axe and strike off thy right hand,' that also would I have done. A life is more to me than dollars in a bag, Chief Ngau. Of thee, Tuisunga, one only is the question I desire to ask: When I bring back my precious things according to the will of Ngau, how may I be sure, indeed, that thou wilt not claim another price for the crew?"

The chief hung his head. "We are not all like Ngau," he returned.

In half an hour the priest was back, with Filipino at his heels, the arms of both filled with well-wrapped packages. Father Zosimus laid his burden on the floor, and began to pluck away the *siapo* that enfolded it.

"Stop!" cried Tuisunga.

The priest desisted with a look of angry wonder, as though some fresh imposition were to be laid upon him.

"Zosimus," said Tuisunga, "since thou left us, these gentlemen and myself have been looking down into our hearts. They are black and pig-like, and we feel ashamed before thee. It would be a mock and an everlasting disgrace to Fangaloa wert thou to sacri-

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fice thy holy things to the meanness of the pig-face Ngau. We have taken counsel together in thine absence, and this is our decision: The boat shall be taken from Ngau, and not one *seni* shall be paid him, nor shall a water-bottle be given, nor a coil of rope; and if his boat be cast away, well, it is God's will. Furthermore, Ngau's house shall be burned and his plantation destroyed for a punishment, and thou shalt have him (if thou shouldst so high-chief will) to make of him a Catholic; for Ngau has been expelled from the Protestant religion, and his communion ticket has been taken from him as one unworthy."

Father Zosimus said nothing, but his eyes gleamed like coals of fire as he hurriedly put his treasures in order for their return; in a trice Filipino was scudding away with them down the hill, to the mirth of all the chiefs, some of whom shouted after him derisively to make haste.

"When are we to start?" asked the priest. "If it be thy high-chief will, the sooner the better."

"But thou canst not go," said Tuisunga. "Thou art old and unfit."

"No man is too old to serve God," returned the priest.

There rose a murmur of dissent from the assembled chiefs. The old man would be a dead weight in the boat; by carrying a priest they would infallibly bring down the anger of God upon them all; even the whites who cared for naught but money dreaded to sail with a *faifeau*.

"This is foolish talk," said Tuisunga. "Do we not

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need Zosimus to talk for us in Apia? Do we not know the ways of whites, and their disdain and pride? Who will speak to the German doctor? Everywhere we shall be disregarded and mocked at. We will say that the wife of Tutumanaia is dying, and behold, they will answer with contumely. 'There is no such minister,' for we know not his name in the foreign stutler."

"Let us start," cried Father Zosimus. "We have no time to waste."

On the rocky beach they found the boat had already been drawn from the shed and made ready by the young men. Ngau's house, which stood close by the landing, was packed with his relatives and family, who looked out from beneath the eaves with lowering faces. The sea was white as far as the eye could reach, and was bursting furiously against the coast and into the half-moon of the bay, while overhead, and against the obliterated sky-line, the wild clouds drove stormily to leeward. The young men looked troubled, and old Tuisunga himself was lost in gloom as he studied the breakers that seemed about to engulf them. Father Zosimus alone was calm and unconcerned in the busy tumult of their making ready; for was not God beside him, with the blessed saints? Bidding Filipino tell the minister of their errand, he took his seat without a tremor when the young men lined themselves beside the gunwales, and began to drive the boat slowly into the water.

There was a yell as she floated off. The young men sprang to their paddles, while Tuisunga seized

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the steering-oar in his sinewy hands. They rode dry over the first wave, then dug into the next bow foremost, and rose half swamped. The third was a huge comber, green as bottle-glass, steep as a park wall, which shot up before them and raced shoreward with a smoking crest. There was a convulsive scurry among the crew; a roar from the crowded beach; as Tuisunga, standing full upright in the stern, and swaying with every jerk of the paddles, headed the boat into the boiling avalanche. The whaler rose like a cork, darted her nose high in air, and for one awful moment seemed to stand on end. When Father Zosimus opened his eyes, she was speeding seaward on something like an even keel, sixteen eager paddles driving her past the point where the breakers sprang. But working out of the bight, they lost the shelter it gave them, and began to feel, for the first time, the unrestrained fury of the gale. There was a frightful sea running; the boat took in water at every turn; and though the wind was favourable, they could not take advantage of it at once. A rag of sail was raised at last, and a straight course laid for Apia, while half the crew rested and the other half baled. But no boat could run before such a sea as followed them. They had one narrow escape, then another by a hair's-breadth; and as they tried to turn, a great black wave suddenly caught and smothered them beneath mountains of water. The crew rose laughing and shouting to the surface, but one grey head was missing. Father Zosimus had received his martyr's crown.

FRENCHY'S LAST JOB



FRENCHY'S LAST JOB

MY health at college having shown signs of giving way, Uncle George had been kind enough to advance the means for my passage to Brisbane, Australia, and back, in order to carry out the doctor's recommendation for a long sea-voyage. I scarcely think the good man intended me to go steerage in a cargo-boat, which I did to make my money last; and I imagine he would have been anything but pleased if he could have seen me on the eve of starting from Brisbane itself for the South Sea Islands with twelve tons of assorted merchandise. Indeed, I was not a little surprised at myself, and at times in the long night watches I blubbered like a baby at my own venturesomeness. But with me, though my people at home did not know it, college had been a failure. I sometimes wondered whether I was unusually dull, or my companions at that inhospitable northern university were above the normal intelligence; but whatever the cause, I know only that I was unable to keep the pace that was set me to follow.

And here I was, with my heart in my mouth, starting on a career of my own choosing, the lessee of a trading station on an island called Tapatuea! More I knew not, beyond the fact that I was to receive a

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moiety of any profits I might earn, and had bound myself to stay where I was put for the space of three years. Considering my age and inexperience, this was a most liberal arrangement, and I have never ceased wondering since how my employers, Messrs. John Cæsar Bibo & Co., were ever dragooned into adding me to their forces. I say "dragooned" advisedly, for it was due entirely to my good friend Henry Mears, the shipping broker of Lonsdale Place, that I happened to be engaged, in spite of the firm's most strenuous protest. Mears had taken to me from the day I first wandered into his office by an accident; and from that time down to the sailing hour of the *Belle Mahone* there was nothing he would not do to serve me. I am not sure that he was financially interested in the firm of John Cæsar Bibo & Co., but he always acted as though his was the controlling voice in its affairs, and he was the only man I ever knew who dared stand up to Old Bee, as we called him. This last-named, the directing spirit of a business that spread its net over half the islands of the Pacific, was a grim, taciturn individual of an indeterminable age,—it was variously reckoned from seventy to a hundred and ten,—who made periodical descents into Mears's office, and sat closeted there for hours. His presence always inspired constraint, and the sight of his ancient, sallow cheek was enough to thin the ranks of the broker's clients—shipmasters and supercargoes for the most part, not all of them sober, and none, apparently, able to look Old Bee in the eye.

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I shall never forget my introduction to the great man.

"This is a nice boy, Mr. Bibo, sir," said Mears, indicating me with a cast of his eye.

"Oh!" said Old Bee.

"I want him to have that Tapatuea store," said Mears.

"You mean the easterly one, where Bob killed the Chinaman?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I'll see him in hell first," said Old Bee.

I thought this ended the matter for good, and said as much to Mears when John Cæsar had departed. But my friend was far from being cast down.

"Oh, that 's all right," he said. "I count it as good as settled."

This was more than I could say, and I had no cause to change my mind on my next meeting with Old Bee.

"I'm putting twelve tons of stuff aboard for the Tapatuea store," said Mears, "and I've told Young Hopeful, here, that you'll keep a berth for him."

"The devil!" said Old Bee, and went straight on with the business he had in hand.

The next day the broker signed my contract by virtue of some power of attorney he possessed for Bibo & Co.

"If he backs out now, you can sue him for damages," he said cheerfully.

I was in a tremble when I next met my employer. It was near our sailing time, and he was in a violent

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hurry. He threw down a paper on the desk and told Mears it was the list of things he had put by for the last.

"Send some one along for them," he said, "some one that knows how to keep his mouth shut. I've clean forgot all that business of the King of Pingalap's: the breech-loading cannon I promised him from Hudson's, and those damned guinea-fowls, and that cylinder for his musical box!"

"Here 's one of your own men," said Mears. "You know young Bence?"

"Good God, that child!" cried the old man. "Did n't I tell you I would n't have him?"

"Pity you had n't spoken before," said the broker, with surprise. "I only signed his contract yesterday."

Old Bee regarded me sourly.

"I don't understand the joke," he said.

"Oh, come, come. He 's twenty-two if he 's a day," said Mears, adding four years to my age; "and as to being young, I dare say he 'll get over it."

"What 's he done, that you 're so keen to get him off?" said Old Bee, still eyeing me with strong disfavour. "However, as you have made it your business to push him down my throat, I suppose I 've got to bolt him."

"He 'd sue you like a shot if you did n't," said Mears. "With that contract in his pocket he 's regularly got you in his power."

This view of the situation made even Old Bee smile, and caused Mears to laugh outright. For me it was scarcely so entertaining; never in my life had I felt

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so small or insignificant, though I plucked up courage when the great man handed me his list and bade the broker count me out sixty sovereigns. This showed that in some small measure I must have won his good opinion, a conviction that was still further strengthened by his departure, when, in the excitement and flurry of the moment, he even shook me by the hand.

A few days after this conversation I found myself at sea, a regularly enrolled trader of the firm's, and one of the after-guard of the bark *Belle Mahone*, Captain Mins. We were bound, according to the time-honoured formula, "for the island of Guam or any other port the master may so direct." I presume there are ships that actually do go to Guam,—if, indeed, there be such a place at all,—but it has never been my fate to come across one. Our Guam was like the rest, a polite fiction to cover up our track and leave a veil of mystery over our voyage. Besides John Caesar Bibo, with whom I have already made you acquainted, there were three others in our little company astern. Captain Mins was a short, bull-necked man of fifty, with abrupt manners and a singularly deliberate way of speech, due perhaps to some impediment of the tongue. This lent to his utterance a gravity almost judicial, and gave an added force to the contradiction which was his only conversational counter. Jean Bonnichon, or "Frenchy," as we called him, was one of the firm's traders returning to the Islands after a brief holiday. He, like Mins, was short and thick-set, but with this ended all resemblance between them. Bonnichon's story was that he

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had come of a wealthy family in Normandy; and it was indubitable (from the papers he had in his possession) that he had served as an officer of horse-artillery in the French army. What he had done to leave it no one precisely knew, nor was our curiosity satisfied by the conflicting explanations he himself was at pains to give. As a soldier of fortune in the Old World, with the Turks, the Bulgarians, and finally with the Arabs of Sus, he had sunk lower and lower, until he had come at last to Australia, there to sink lower still.

Six years of colonial life, followed by seven on the island of Apaiang, had transformed Frenchy into one of those strange creatures without a country. Under the heel of adversity the Frenchman had been completely stamped out of him; only some fragments of the army officer remained; the bulging chest, the loud, peremptory voice, the instant obedience to any one he counted his superior. He annoyed Old Bee excessively by leaping to his feet whenever our employer addressed him, a military habit so ingrained that he was quite unable to break himself of it. Intended for deference, its effect on John Cæsar (the most fidgety and preoccupied of patriarchs) was to drive him into one of his sudden tempers, when woe betide the man who dared to first address him. Adam Babcock, a humble, silent creature, completed the number of our mess. He was the mate of the ship, and took his meals alone after we had quitted the table, a forlorn arrangement that is usual in small vessels. He was so completely null in our life

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that I have some difficulty in recollecting him at all. He had seen misfortunes, I remember, and had certainly come down very much in the world, for he was the only person aft who treated me with the least consideration. On one occasion he even called me "sir," and gave me a present of some shells.

With Frenchy I was soon on terms of shipboard acquaintance, but for the others I might have been invisible, for all they ever noticed me. Old Bee, for the matter of that, seldom spoke to any one, and the sight of his bilious cheek would have daunted, I believe, the most incorrigible bore in London. We saw little of him save at meal-times, for he was perpetually busy in his cabin, adding up figures, or stamping on his copying-book like a dancing dervish. I am at a loss to say what his labours were all about; they were, and always have been, to me the cause of unceasing amazement. I was not sorry, however, that Old Bee kept so much to himself, for I feared him like the plague, and never felt comfortable within the range of his bloodshot eyes. It fell to Frenchy and the captain to keep the ball of conversation rolling, which they did by disputing with each other on every topic that came up. Were the captain, with some warmth, to make a statement, it was just as certain to be met by Frenchy's great horse-laugh and shrill, jeering contradiction. They could agree on nothing, whether it was the origin of the Russo-Turkish war or the way the natives cook devil-fish. No provocation was too unimportant to set them at each other's throats, no slight too trivial to be ignored.

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Once, to my extreme embarrassment, they differed on the subject of myself; the Frenchman saying that I was the type of young ne'er-do-well under which the colony of Queensland was sinking; while the captain just as vehemently persisted (for the time being only) that it was such as I who had made the British Empire! The complimentary view of Captain Mins's made very little practical difference in his treatment of me, which from the beginning had been marked by coldness and dislike. In fact, I could not help perceiving, for all their wrangling and apparent disagreement, that the pair were fast friends. It was I, not Frenchy, who was the outsider on that ship. Indeed, I count some of those lonely days on the *Belle Mahone* as the very bitterest part of my life, and I wished myself at home a thousand times.

My only friend on board was Lum, the Chinese cook, whose circumstances were so akin to mine that we were drawn together by a common instinct. He, too, was condemned to solitude, having little in common with our crew of Rotumah Islanders, who shunned him like a leper; while I, as the reader knows, held a scarcely better position among the after-guard. When his work was done, Lum and I used to smoke cigarettes together under the lee of a boat, or, if it rained, within the stuffy confines of his cabin next the galley. He was a mine of worldly wisdom, for there was nothing he had not done or had not tried to do, from piracy to acting on the stage; and he would unfold the tale of his experiences with such drollery and artlessness that his society was to

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me an endless entertainment. Poor Lum ! there was little of the seamy side of life he had not seen, scarcely a treachery he had not endured, in the years he had followed the sea.

Our first port was to be Lascom Island, an immense atoll which had remained uninhabited until Bibo & Co. took possession of it in the eighties. Their intention had been to extend its few cocoanut-palms into one vast grove, and for this purpose they maintained a force of half a dozen indentured labourers from Guadalcanar, who were superintended by a white man named Stocker. It was for the purpose of carrying this Stocker supplies and inspecting his year's work that we were here to make our first call.

We reached the island late at night, and lay off and on till dawn. The daylight showed me a narrow, bush-grown strip of unending sand, which stretched in a great curve until lost to view beneath the horizon. As far as the eye could reach, the breakers were thundering against the huge horseshoe with a fury that made one sick to hear them. Of all forsaken and desolate places it has ever been my lot to see, I search my memory in vain for the match of Lascom Island. Once, however, that we had opened its channel and made our hesitating way into the lagoon beyond, I found more to please me. Skimming over the lake-like surface, with every stitch drawing, and the captain in the crosstrees conning the ship through the gleaming dangers that beset us on every hand, it was indeed an experience not to be recalled without a thrill. We had need of a lynx eye aloft,

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for the lagoon was thick with coral rocks, and the channel, besides, was so tortuous and so cramped that one false turn of a spoke would have torn our bottom out.

I let myself down beside the dolphin-striker, and sat there above our hissing bows, enjoying as I did so an extraordinary sense of danger and exhilaration. At times it seemed to me as though we were sailing through air, so transparent was the medium through which we moved, so clear the tangled coral garden that lay below. From my perch I contemplated the gradual unfolding of the little settlement towards which we were tending: first of all a faint blur, which gradually became transformed into a grove of cocoanuts; bits of white and brown which resolved themselves into houses and sheds; a dark patch on the lagoon shore that I made out to be a sort of pier; then, last of all, the finished picture, in which there was nothing hid, or left to the imagination to decipher. There was something most depressing in the sight of this tiny village, with its faded whitewash, its general appearance of lifelessness and decay, and above its roofs the palm-tops bending like grass in the gusty breeze. Nothing stirred in the profound shade; not a sound came forth to greet us; and, except for a faint haze of smoke above one of the trees, we might have thought the place abandoned. I remembered that Stocker was in likelihood planting cocoanuts with his men, perhaps miles away on the wild sea-beach; in my mind's eye I could see him pursuing his monotonous vocation, a miserable Crusoe toiling for a wage. My thoughts were still running in some such channel

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when I was suddenly startled by the apparition of a man who came running out of the shadow with a bundle in his arms. It was a flag, which he fixed to the halyards of the staff and slowly ran up. When it was half-mast high he twitched it loose, displaying the British ensign upside down. Then, as I was still gazing at him, he made fast the ropes and hurried down to the pier.

Realising that something must be wrong on shore, I climbed back to the deck and hastened to where Old Bee and Frenchy were standing aft. I think the former must have seen the question on my lips, for he gave me such a swift, angry look that I dared not open my mouth, but slunk behind Frenchy in silence. He, the trader, must have just endured some such rebuff himself, for he was in a frightful ill humour, and swore at me when I tried to whisper in his ear. To learn anything from Babcock was impossible, for he was jumping about the topgallant forecastle, clearing the anchors and getting in the head-sails. When the vessel had been brought to a standstill near a rusty buoy, a boat was cleared and lowered, and we all got into it with alacrity: Old Bee, Mins, Frenchy, and I, and a couple of hands to pull.

We were met at the pier by some natives in singlets and dungaree trousers, who gazed at us as solemnly as we gazed back at them. One grizzled old fellow was spokesman for the rest,—Joe, they called him,—and he told us, with a great deal of writhing (as though he had pain in his inside), that Stocker was dead. He had died ten days before, “of some

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kind of sickness," as Joe called it; and lest we had any doubt about it, we were pressed to walk up to Stocker's house and see for ourselves. For, fearing that they might subsequently be accused of making away with him, they had left Stocker's body untouched in the bed where he had died. The fact was palpable enough before we had gone a hundred yards in the direction of a little house, which from the distance looked very quaint and pretty. But I forbore to follow the others any further in the investigation they were obviously inclined to make, and I struck off from them to examine the settlement alone.

I have good reasons for thinking that it had been planned originally for other purposes than that of merely sheltering a gang of indentured labourers. It was to have been the entrepôt or hub of a huge South Sea system, and from its central warehouses a whole empire of surrounding groups was to have been supplied. Indeed, the whole project had so far taken shape that large sheds had even been erected for the commerce that was destined never to come, and commodious houses raised for the managers and clerks whose contracts were still unwritten. I wandered at will through those crumbling rooms, some of which had never been occupied, though they were now in decay; and along the grassy street on which they had been made to face. I found a battery of four small cannon covering the approach from the pier; a dozen ship's tanks filled with rain-water (the only kind obtainable on the island); and in a shuttered room I stumbled over a hundred Snyder rifles shining

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in the dark. But what riveted my attention most was the interior of a long, low warehouse full of wreckage. Here, in mouldering, unsorted confusion, had been thrown all that a dozen years had seen salvaged from the sea: binnacles, hatches, yards and canvas, old steering-wheels, blocks, and strange tangles of gear and junk that seemed scarcely worth the saving. Here were life-belts in the last stages of rotteness; odds and ends of perished cargoes; barrels of tallow; twisted drums of what had once been paint or varnish; some cuddy-chairs of the folding kind; and a quantity of boards, barnacled and water-worn. I must have spent the better part of an hour turning over all this stuff, and in reconstructing in my mind the bygone ships from which they had been taken; musing on the fate of those who had once sailed them so unwisely that Lascom Island had been their final port and its bursting seas their grave.

When at last I emerged again into the open air, I perceived with relief that our boat still lay beside the steps of the pier, for I had no desire to be left alone on Lascom Island even for a single hour. I counted for so little on board the ship that I had a panic fear that they might go to sea again without me, and I accordingly returned to the seamen who were smoking under the lee of a palm. We waited there a long time before we were aroused by the sound of voices and the sight of Old Bee and Frenchy walking slowly towards us. The old rogue looked pale and agitated; he had his arm through Frenchy's, and was speaking to him with intense seriousness and a volu-

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bility quite unusual. He seemed pleading with the trader, urging him apparently to something distasteful, something that was perpetually negated by Frenchy's bullet-head and his reiterated "No, sare; no, sare; it is eempossible."

"I'll make it seventy-five a month," quavered Bibo, "and all found."

Again the Frenchman shook his head.

"Ask anysing else, sare," he said; "but this, oh, no. But why not the boy?" he added.

"That young ass!" cried Old Bee.

"I won't stay here alone, if that 's what you mean," said Frenchy. "But if you'll run down to Treachery Island and let me get a girl there, I tell you, sare, I will do it for the seventy-five. But alone? Good Lord! I'd follow Stocker in ze mont'."

Bibo groaned aloud. "It'll take a day and a half to run down there, and all of three to beat back," he said; "and you might be a week getting a girl."

Frenchy shrugged his shoulders. "Old Tom Rye-gate's there," he said. "He'll do ze thing quick enough if I make it worth his while. They say, too, that he's in with the Samoan pastor there, Jimmy Upolu. Brice of the *Wandering Minstrel* told me he was at Treachery three years ago, and picked up ze prettiest woman in the island for sixteen pounds. Told me he gave four pounds to Tom, four to ze pastor, and the rest to ze woman's folks in trade. He was in such a damned rush he could n't wait to cheapen things—just paid his money and went. But she was a tearing fine piece, he said."

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Old Bee hardly seemed to listen to him. "I suppose *you* don't care," he said bitterly, "but this business is going to put me two weeks behind and maybe lose me the shell at Big Muggin. Of all cursed luck, who ever had the match of it? First to last, this island has been a millstone round my neck, one everlasting drain and bother. What with the rats, and Charley Sansome's D. T.'s, and the lawsuit with Poppenheifer, and this business of Stocker's, I tell you, Frenchy, I 'm clean sick of it. It 's just money, money, money all the time, and I don't believe I 've ever made enough out of it to buy me a suit of clothes!"

He stopped speaking when he caught sight of me, and stepped down into the boat without another word. Frenchy, too, said nothing as we pulled back to the ship, but chewed at his mustache in a moody, impatient way. But once on board, the captain was called below, and an animated discussion ensued in the main cabin. Through the open skylight I could not forbear overhearing a little of what was said, and I gathered that Mins was joining with his employer in trying to persuade Frenchy to remain on the island in Stocker's place. At least, I caught Frenchy's explosive remonstrances, and half-jeering, half-angry efforts to extricate himself from their snares. Apparently he succeeded only too well, for Old Bee, somewhat half-heartedly, at last proposed Babcock's name. At this the captain himself was up in arms. Was n't he doing with one white mate when he ought by rights to have two? Nothing would induce him,

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he said, to surrender Babcock; nor would he, in such a case, answer for the safety of the ship, nor for the insurance were she lost. Then he turned the tables completely by proposing that Old Bee himself should stop on the island! This was received by Frenchy with a roar of laughter and a blow of his fist that shook the cabin. Old Bee did not take it with the same good humour, but broke out furiously that he might as well throw up the cruise at once. Mine, of course, was the next name to come up, and Frenchy was sent to bring me before the meeting. I am ashamed to think what a fool they must have thought me, for instead of offering me the seventy-five dollars a month—not that I would have taken the job for a million—Old Bee held out the inducement of ten a week. From the manner in which he spoke to me, and the bullying tone of his voice, it was not easy to gather whether I was asked or ordered to go ashore in Stocker's shoes; and it is my belief that if I had knuckled down in the slightest he would have dropped the first formula altogether. But I had overheard too much to be taken at a disadvantage. Besides, I shrank from the proposal with every fibre in my body, and was determined not to be put ashore except by force. My repulsion was so unconcealed; and it was so plain that I could be neither threatened nor cajoled; that more than once Frenchy burst out with his great laugh, and even Mins smiled sourly at my vehemence. Old Bee did not long persist in the attempt to override my resolution; he had always taken an unflattering view of my capabilities, and

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even as a planter of cocoanuts I had perhaps excited his distrust. Besides, I would not do it. There was no getting over that!

I was thankful at last to be dismissed, even at the price of a stinging word or two. What were words in comparison with a year on Lascom Island! I went and locked myself in my cabin, and blocked the door of it with my trunk, so fearful was I that I might in some way be tricked or dragged ashore. I dared not emerge until long after the anchor had been weighed and the sails set, and even then I came out of my room with the utmost caution. When I reached the deck, the settlement was already far astern and the ship heading through the western passage for the sea. Lum told me that we were running down to Treachery Island, and gave me some hot bread and tea in the galley in place of the lunch I had lost.

I had read of South Sea paradises, but at Treachery Island I was soon to see one for myself. After the desolate immensity of Lascom, it was delightful to reach this tiny isle, with its lagoon no bigger than the Serpentine and its general appearance of fertility and life. As we ran close along its wooded shores, and saw the beehive houses in the shade, and the people running out to wave a greeting to our passing ship; as we saw the drawn-up boats, the little coral churches, and the shimmering lagoon beyond, on which there was many a white sail dancing, I thought I had never in all my life imagined any place more beautiful. Nor did I think to change my mind

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when we hove to off a glorious beach, and dropped the ladder for a score of smiling islanders to swarm aboard. I loved the sight of their kindly faces after the sullen looks that had so long been my portion; and my heart warmed towards them as it might to some old and half-forgotten friends.

When a boat was lowered, I kept close at the heels of Old Bee, Frenchy, and the captain as they descended and took their places; and I followed their example with so much assurance that it never occurred to any one to say me nay. The captain swore at me for jumping on his foot, but that was all the attention I received. Frenchy was the hero of the hour, and his gay sash and tie and spotless ducks were the occasion of many pleasantries at his expense. Even Old Bee condescended to tease our beau on the subject of the future Mrs. Frenchy; and at the home thrusts and innuendoes (not all of which I could understand) the captain's red face deepened into purple as he shook with laughter and slapped his friend upon the back. Frenchy pretended not to like it, and gave tit for tat in good earnest; but it was evident that he was prodigiously pleased with himself and the others. With his chest thrown out, his black brush of a mustache waxed to a point, and his military, dandified air, Frenchy seemed more low, more indefinitely offensive, wicked, and dangerous than he had ever appeared to me before.

Every one was in a high good humour when we reached the beach, where special precautions had to be taken in order to spare Frenchy's finery the least

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contamination ; and we were soon walking up together through a crowd of islanders to the trader's house. Tom Ryegate was there to meet us, a benignant-looking old man with a plenitude of grey hair, a watery blue eye, and a telltale tremor of his hands. A closer inspection revealed the fact that Tom Ryegate was soaked and pickled in gin, a circumstance which perhaps accounted for the depressing views he took of life and for his somewhat snarling mode of address. When the news had been passed, and Stocker's demise talked over, with some very unedifying reminiscences of the deceased's peculiarities, the conversation was brought gently round to the business in hand.

But on the subject of girls Tom Ryegate was a broken reed. We might be able to pick up a likely young woman, or we might not. "It all depended," he said, without adding on what. The fact was that things was n't as they used to be on Treachery ; the niggars had lost all respeek for whites ; it was money they cared for now, nothing but money. It made old Tom Ryegate sick to think of it ; it was all this missionary coddling and putting ideas into their heads. Why, he remembered the day when you could buy a ton of shell for a trade gun ; when a white man knew no law but what seemed good to him. But it was all changed now ; them days was passed for ever ; the niggars had no more respeek for whites : it was all money, all money.

This dreary and unsatisfactory monologue was the preface to a recital of all his recent troubles. Mrs. Captain Saxe had been kind enough to bring him

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back his daughter Elsie. Captain Mins would remember his little Elsie? No? Well, it did n't much matter; howsomever, as he was saying, she had been educated in the convent at Port Darwin—for an island girl there was no better place than a convent (here 's luck, gentlemen). She was sixteen, and that pretty and nice-behaved that he almost cried when he saw her! And white? Why, you could n't have told she was a quarter-carste, she was that white. At first they had got along together very nicely, for she was no slouch of a girl, and could cook and sew, and play her little piece on the zither in the evening, and sing! Sing? Why, you just orter hear that girl sing! And to see her kneel down at night and pray in her little shimmy, it made him feel what a bad old feller he was—by God, it did—and so far to leeward of everything decent and right. Well, well, it went along so far nigh six months (drink hearty, gentlemen; Mr. Bibo, sir, here 's my respects), and he had no more thought of what was a-coming than a babe unborn.

There was a half-carste here named Ned Forrest, who did a little boat-building and traded a bit besides. Not a bad chap for a half-carste, only he fancied himself overmuch, and thought because he could read and drink square-face that he was as good as any white man. It made him sick, the airs that feller put on at times. Imagine his feelings, then, when this Forrest up and asked him one day for permission to marry Elsie, and said a lot of rot about their being in love with each other! Just animalism, that 's what

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he called it. His Elsie, who had been bred up a lady in Port Darwin! Had n't he said that the niggers were losing all respect for whites? He booted the swine off his verandah, that 's what he did, and he gave Elsie such a talking to that she cried for three days afterwards. He thought she had had a passing fancy for the swine, but he bade her remember her self-respect and just let out a few things about the feller to put her on her guard like. But though she promised to give him up, she took it kind of hard. He used often to find her crying and moping about the house, and, like a fool, had thought little of it. He did think enough of it, however, to go to Jimmy Upolu—that 's the Summoan native pastor here—to forbid him to marry the pair if they had in mind any hanky-panky tricks.

By God, it was well he did so, for what was his surprise to find that Forrest had been trying to get round the pastor for that very purpose—mending his boat, stepping a new mast in it, and lending a hand generally with the church repairs. The pastor was a crafty customer and had a considerable eye for the main chance, but he was a sight too far in Tom's debt to go against him. Tom had only to raise his hand and Jimmy was as good as bounced off the island, for Jimmy 's no pay, and a complaint at headquarters would settle his hash. So he did n't mince matters with Jimmy, but told him flat out that there must be no marrying Elsie on the sly.

That done, he gave the girl another dressing down. Pity he had n't thrashed her, like he had often done

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her ma, but it was n't in flesh and blood to lash your own daughter. So he let it go at that, and arranged with Peter, the king, to run up some kind of a charge against Ned Forrest, so that the next man-of-war might deport him. Luckily Ned was a British subject, and it would have been strange if the navy captain would n't have taken the word of a responsible white merchant, not to speak of the king's and the missionary's, against a dirty swine of a half-carste. Howsomever, no man-of-war came,—they never do when they 're wanted,—and things went on from bad to worse.

One morning he awoke to find that Elsie had skipped out. Yes, by God, gone with the half-carste! At first he could n't believe it; but when he went off in a tearing rage to see the pastor, he found a crowd gathered round the church door, all chattering at once, like niggers do. They made way for him, and what do you think he saw on that door, so help him? A regular proclamation in English and native, saying as how Elsie Ryegate and Edward George Forrest had taken each other for husband and wife, for better or worse, for sickness or sorrow, until death should them part, and a lot of stuff besides about the pastor and the king both refusing to perform the marriage ceremony. It was well written, that he would allow, though it made him wild to read it. He tore it down and put it into his pocket for evidence, and went on to see Jimmy Upolu. Jimmy was in fits too, for if people got to marrying one another in that church-door way, what would become of Jimmy's fees?

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But though Jimmy could talk, he was n't much of a hand to do things. What missionary nigger is? He would n't hear of no trial, let alone a little idea with a stick of dynamite. He could think of nothing better than excommunication and talking *at* him from the pulpit—a fat lot he 'd care for either, would Forrest! It seemed nothing could be done, for without the pastor and the king where would be the use? A man had to be keerful these days: the natives were losing all respeck for whites, and them men-of-war fellers were as likely to take a nigger's word as his own. Was n't it sickening! Well, so it all ended in smoke, and Elsie and Ned set up housekeeping together. He had never clapped eyes on her but once, when she threw herself on her knees before him, right there in the dirt, and said she 'd die if he would n't forgive her, and please, would n't he let the pastor marry her and Ned? It was a tight place for a father—a father as doted on that girl. But a filthy half-carste! Who could stomach such a swine for his daughter? He told her he 'd rather see her stretched dead at his feet; that 's what he said, just like that, and walked on. It was hard, but a man must do his dooty. That was the last he had seen of her—the last he wished to see of her till she 'd quit that feller. If she 'd do that, his poor, dishonoured girl, she 'd never find her father's door closed against her; no, by God, it stood open for her night and day.

I had become pretty tired of the old man and his daughter long before he had reached the conclusion of his tale; but the others listened readily enough, and

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seemed genuinely to commiserate him. Captain Mins remarked in his slow, deliberate tones, that wherever you went, half-castes were the same—all swine. And Old Bee said that he'd see that the matter was properly represented to the next man-of-war that came down that way. Frenchy went further and asked a whole raft of questions; about the girl; about Forrest; about the island generally. What sort of man might the king be? Oh, Peter was all right, was he? Was this Forrest a stranger, or had he been born on the island? A stranger. Well, he could n't have much of a poosh then—not many *kowtubs* to back him up in case of a row? And the missionary niggarr was square, was he? Old Tom had n't any picture of that there girl, had he? So this did n't do her justice, eh? Why, she was a perfect leetle beauty. Frenchy held the photograph a long time in his hand, studying it with close attention as he puffed at his cigarette. Finally tossing it to one side, he looked earnestly at the floor, and drummed in an undecided way with one foot. Then he stretched out his arms and gave a great yawn.

“Let's me and you go for a promenade, sonny,” he said, addressing me. “We don't want to sit here all ze day, do we?”

Once in the open air, however, his desire to walk seemed to vanish, for he began to ask for Ned Forrest's store, and offered a stick of tobacco to any one that could guide us there. Pretty well the whole village did that, and we were conducted in state to a wooden house near the lagoon, about a mile distant from the spot where we had first landed. Frenchy

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stood on no ceremony on going in, and I followed close behind him, much less at my ease than my companion. It was dark within the house, and the hum of a sewing-machine covered our approach; it was a minute or two before we were discovered by the young girl we dimly saw at work, who sprang up at last, with a little cry, and came towards us.

Frenchy became suavity itself: begged Mrs. Forrest's pardon for our intrusion, but it was eempossible to reseest the pleasure of calling upon a white lady. Might he have ze honour of acquainting her with hees friend, Mr. Bence?

The young lady, though somewhat fluttered by our unexpected visit, betrayed no more than natural embarrassment. She begged us to be seated, inquired the name of our vessel, and acquitted herself with an ease and self-possession that few young white women could have rivalled. It was we, indeed, Frenchy and I, who completely lost our heads; for Tom Ryegate's daughter was of such a captivating prettiness, and her manners were at once so gentle, arch, and engaging, that we could hardly forbear staring her out of countenance, or restrain our admiration within the bounds of ordinary politeness. She was no darker than a Spaniard, with sparkling eyes, and the most glorious black hair in the world. Her girlish figure was not too well concealed by the flimsy cotton dress in which we had surprised her, and it failed to hide altogether her rich young beauty. From the top of her curly head to the little naked feet she kept so anxiously beneath her gown, there was not one feature to mar

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the rest, not a curve nor a dimple that one would have wished to change. I cannot recall much of what we talked about, though the picture of her there in that dark room is as vivid a memory as any I have. We drank fresh cocoanuts, I remember; listened to a cheap music-box; and looked at the photographs in an album. With the practical gallantry of the Islands, Frenchy begged her to ask for any favour that we had it in our power to grant. The whole ship, he said, was at her deesposal. Was she sure that she needed nozing? Some ear-rings? A bolt of silk? A really nice beet of lace he had intended for the queen of Big Muggin?

But she would accept nothing. You see, her husband did not like her to take presents from white gentlemen. The supercargo of the *Lancashire Lass* had given her two pairs of shoes, and some goldfish in a bottle, but Ned was much displeased. Ned said that people would talk and take away her character; besides, it was n't for poor folks to have shoes and goldfish. Ned was a very proud man and did not pretend to be what he was not. She was still speaking when Ned himself unexpectedly appeared at another door. Amid laughing explanations, we were made acquainted with the head of the house, a big, shy half-caste, who welcomed us with a tremendous hand-shake apiece. He was a powerful young man, and his muscular throat and arms were still grimy with the blacksmithing at which he had been engaged. I liked his unshrinking, honest look, and as he turned his eyes on his beautiful wife there was in them something of

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the tenderness and devotion of a dog's. Elsie ordered the great fellow about with a pretty imperiousness that only lovers use, and with a peculiar softness of intonation that did not escape me. It made me a little envious and heartsick to see this happiness in which I could have no share, and I was almost glad at last when Frenchy rose to go. Lifting her little hand to his lips, he begged her to please count him her friend and serviteur to command, and regretted that the pressure of affairs would preclude him from calling again before the ship sailed. He had been so assiduous in his attentions to the young beauty that I was at a loss to understand this sudden renunciation; but I put it down to his common sense, which must have told him that in this quarter his gallantry could only be wasted. Any one could see that our pretty quarter-caste was head over heels in love with her own husband; and however much she might laugh and talk with strangers, and enjoy the impression her starry eyes indubitably produced, her heart, at least, was in no uncertain keeping. It was just as much Ned Forrest's as the clothes upon her back or the house in which she lived. How I envied him his prize as Frenchy and I walked back silently towards old Tom's, and saw the bark's sails shining through the trees. I tried to say something about the charming girl we had left, but Frenchy hardly seemed to listen. For a long time he continued in a deep study, puffing hard at his cigarette, and looking, as it appeared to me, more than usually reckless and devil-may-care. We found the others exactly where we had left them,—though not perhaps

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so sober,—and they haled Frenchy in and bade him report himself, the square-face meanwhile making another round.

“What news of thy quest, O illustrious horse-soldier?” demanded the captain, in his usual thick, loud voice—a little louder and a little thicker for the gin. “Hast thou found a damsel to thy taste on this thy servant’s isle?”

“*Hein?*” said Frenchy, with a queer glance at me.

“You must do something,” said Old Bee, “and do that something soon, Frenchy my Bo, for I can’t stay here for ever at seven pound a day!”

“Here’s luck!” said the gentleman thus addressed, raising his eyebrows significantly over his glass. There must have been further interchange of signals, for Bibo turned to me and in a very kind and flattering way requested me to go back to the ship. The fact was, he said, that it was not right to leave her altogether to Babcock, and it would go far to lessen his own anxiety if there were another white man on board. I ought to know pretty well by this time what Kanakas were like, he continued, and how little the crew would care if they laid the bark ashore or drowned her in a squall. He put it to me, he said, as a personal favour to himself. To such a request I could, of course, make but one answer, though it went sorely against the grain for me to return again on board; the more especially when I found the reliable Babcock snoring on a hatch. I had only to look from him to the boatswain’s leathery, watchful face to realise how

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completely I had been tricked. The ship was as safe under Johnny's care as she would have been in Brisbane harbour, and I could see that he was handling her with the most admirable skill. My only complaint was that he acquitted himself far too well, for in the humour that then possessed me I would gladly have seen him pile her on the reef.

It was hot on board, and the day seemed endless, so slowly did the hours drag on. Three or four times the boat came off from shore and returned again. At one time it brought out old Tom Ryegate, together with our whole party, who at once went below. Afterwards they sent the steward up for Johnny and two or three of the hands to come down. I felt too sulky and ill used to pay much attention to all this coming and going, though in the bottom of my heart I could not resist a certain pang of curiosity. I doubted not that my companions were up to some mischief, the nature of which I was at a loss to understand; but the way they put their heads together was enough to inspire me with alarm; and I did not like at all this calling in of the crew. I tried to sound Johnny after they had pulled back to the settlement, but he turned a deaf ear to me and pretended not to understand my questions. I tried Lum with like ill success, finding him also (though from a different reason) cross and uncommunicative.

"White man all same devil," he said, and went on kneading his dough.

Supper-time came, and Babcock and I had the table to ourselves; he was very garrulous and tiresome, and

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I suspect he had been nipping on the sly, for he giggled a lot, and sometimes talked foolishly to himself. Altogether I was sick of the ship and of Babcock and of my own company; and when I came on deck after supper, and saw the shore lights twinkling through the palms, and the torches of the fishers on the roof, I felt I could no longer control my impatience.

Slipping down the gangway, I signalled to one of the canoes that hung about the ship, and a few minutes later I was landed for the second time near old Tom Ryegate's store. Needless to say, I gave it a wide berth, for the last thing I wished was to run across any of my shipmates. I was spied out by some little children playing tag in the dark, who took me by the hands and led me about the settlement. I was conducted into half a dozen houses, and given green nuts to drink, with here and there a present of a hat or a mat or some pearl-shells. I do not know how long I had been wandering about in this fashion—but it must have been nearer two hours than one—when I was suddenly startled by a roar of voices and a sound of scurrying feet. In an instant we were all rushing in the direction of the noise, falling and stumbling over one another in our excitement. At the church I found a crowd assembled, buzzing like bees, and crushing frantically against the unglazed windows for a sight of what was taking place within. I jostled my way round to the door, where I was surprised to find our brawny boatswain Johnny, together with several of our men, keeping the other natives at bay. They would have kept me out, too, if they

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had dared, but I pushed boldly past them and entered the building.

It was all but empty. At the farther end, by the light of a tawdry hanging lamp, I perceived that some sort of service or ceremony was in progress, and I was thunderstruck to recognise in the little congregation there assembled every member of the shore party. Old Bee and the captain were standing on one side, the latter smoking a cigar and spitting from time to time on the coral floor ; next them, his benignant hair all awry, was Tom Ryegate, leaning unsteadily against the wall, and wiping his eyes on a trade handkerchief. A burly Kanaka whom I had no difficulty in recognising as Jimmy Upolu, the native pastor, was reciting something out of a book over the heads of Frenchy and a woman, who both knelt before him. Frenchy's costume had suffered not a little since the morning ; it was dirty and stained, and the collar of his coat was torn half-way down his back, as though some one had seized him there with a smutty hand. In an instant I seemed to see the whole thing. I ran forward with my heart in my mouth, and even as I did so there rose from the outside the strangled cry of a man, followed by a scuffle and the noise of blows.

The woman beside Frenchy sprang to her feet, and as she turned towards me I recognised the ashen face of Elsie Ryegate. Frenchy caught her in his arms, and swearing beneath his breath, forced her down again beside him ; while the pastor, not a whit abashed, rattled on briskly with the service.

He soon came to an end, closing his book with a

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flourish, as much as to say the ceremony was over. Frenchy rose to his feet, still with one arm round Elsie's waist.

"How much?" he asked.

Then old Tom Ryegate came staggering up, boo-hooing like a great baby. He wrung Frenchy's hand; gave his daughter a slobbering kiss; and broke out into a whole rigmarole of how pleased he was to see her made an honest woman, by God, and married to a gentleman she could respect and look up to. The girl herself might have been dead, for all the attention she paid to him or any one; but for Frenchy's enfolding arm, I believe she would have fallen to the ground, for she was stony white, and shaking in a kind of chill. I could hear her teeth chatter, while Frenchy haggled with the pastor, and the trader went on with his endless gabble.

We all moved out of the church together, old Tom Ryegate stumbling along in the rear, making very poor weather of it in the dark. All at once he went sprawling over something, and we could hear him cursing to himself as he tried to get on his legs again.

"Now 's our chance, gentlemen all," cried the captain, and off we set running for the beach, old Tom's voice growing fainter and fainter in our rear. We tumbled pell-mell into the boat that was waiting for us, and shoved off into deep water amid a hullabaloo of laughter and cheers. Far behind us we could still hear the old fellow calling and swearing, and even when we drew up under the bark, I thought I could yet detect the faint echo of his voice. All this

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time Elsie herself had made no sound, and had submitted like a terror-stricken child to be led where Frenchy wished. But when she felt her feet on the gangway ladder, and saw above her head the tangled yards and rigging of the ship, she must have realised all at once what fate had in store for her, for she uttered a shuddering cry and began to sob. I stood up in the boat; I tried to say something of what I felt; I remember I called Frenchy a damned villain, and us no better for helping him.

"Stop that row!" cried the captain, giving me a punch in the ribs that made me gasp and turn sick. "I won't have a word spoken against Mr. or Mrs. Bonnichon, and if I catch you at it again, you young whelp, I'll lick you within an inch of your life. I won't allow a mischief-maker on my ship, nor a dirty scandal-monger. Just you remember that, young gentleman."

I went up the gangway in silence, humiliated and rebellious, to spend a sleepless night in plans of revenge. My heart seemed to burst with a sense of my powerlessness, and I turned and turned on my pillow in a fever. The morning found us beating up against a stiff trade-wind and a heavy sea, and at breakfast the captain had more than once to leave the table in order to see us through a squall. He and Old Bee were the only persons at that meal except myself, but neither commented on Frenchy's absence or said a word about the events of yesterday. Indeed, I don't think they exchanged three remarks in all, and these were about the weather. I could not help gazing from time to

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time at the door of Frenchy's state-room; and once, in so doing, I encountered the captain's baleful eye. I looked away hastily, and, I am ashamed to add, I trembled. Frenchy made no appearance at lunch, but towards three o'clock of the afternoon I saw him steal stealthily out and get a bottle of whisky and some biscuits, and then close his door again on our little world. I was struck afresh with his gross, evil look, and shrank, as one might from a wild beast, at the very sight of him.

The second day passed much as the first, though it found us lying better up to windward. Frenchy still kept away from the table, and I used to stare at his closed state-room door with an awful curiosity. My two companions were, if anything, more glum and uncommunicative than ever; and when I tried to draw out Babcock I found that his mouth also had been sealed. He would give me only snapping answers, and was painfully ill at ease in my presence. Lum had scalded himself twice in the galley, and was in no conversational mood; and when I tried to unbosom myself to him he cut me short with the remark that "white men were all same devil."

We ran into Lascom in the morning of the third day, and by ten o'clock were at anchor off the settlement. Babcock at once hoisted out eight or nine tons of Frenchy's stuff, most of it food for his year's sojourn on the island, together with a lot of mess pork and biscuits for the Kanakas; and all hands were busy getting it into the whale-boat alongside. The captain and Old Bee were sitting side by side on the top of the

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house, the latter with a pocket full of papers and a portfolio desk across his knee. They were laughing together, and Mins was holding the ink-bottle in one hand. Lum was standing at the break of the poop, peeling potatoes and watching his bread, which was spread out on the hatch to rise. I could not stay still, but kept moving about in a state of frightful agitation, for I knew that Elsie and the Frenchman must soon appear.

Suddenly I heard a half-smothered oath, the shattering of glass, the rapid patter of naked feet. I turned, and there was Elsie Ryegate poised on the ship's rail, her black hair flying to the wind, her bare arms outspread. She was over like a flash, and her feet had barely touched the water when Frenchy leaped after her. We all shouted and ran aft, the crew whooping like a pack of boys. The girl headed as straight as an arrow for the shore, but she had not swum twenty strokes before Frenchy was panting and blowing close behind her. Seeing, apparently, that she could not hope to escape, she turned and seemed to resign herself to capture. But as Frenchy tried to seize her by the hair, she swiftly threw both her arms round his neck, and with a tragic look of exultation she sank with him below.

Down, down they went, the puddled green water showing them vaguely beneath the surface, sometimes with a ghastly distinctness, sometimes with strange distortions of feature and limb. They rose at last, still struggling, still drowning each other, the girl's arms clinched round the man's neck, he spluttering

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horribly and trying to strike at her with his fist. Spellbound, we saw them sink again, their convulsed faces almost touching, their bodies writhing in agony. Mins let out a great roar and darted for the life-belt; there was a rush forward to cast off the whaler in which Frenchy's stuff was being lightered; Old Bee screamed out, "Jump! jump!" to our boatswain, who was looking on transfixed, pointing madly at the bubbles that kept rising to the surface. Johnny made one step aft, and was just on the point of vaulting over the rail when Lum caught him squarely round the waist and held him like a vise. There was a short, violent struggle between them, and the Chinaman went down with a crash under the Kanaka. But by the time the latter was on his feet again the moment for his services had passed, for Frenchy's body, still locked in Elsie Ryegate's arms, drifted lifeless under our quarter. The captain pointed at it with an awe-stricken finger, and signalled the whale-boat where to pull.

The girl's corpse was thrown on an old sail in the waist, and left there, naked and dripping, for the crew to gape at; while Frenchy was borne off by the captain, who, with streaming tears, worked over him for an hour in the trade-room. When Lum and I had recovered our wits, we drew the poor drowned creature into the galley, put hot bottles to her feet, rubbed her icy body with our hands, and held her up between us to the blazing fire. Lum blew into her mouth, worked her arms up and down, and exhausted a thousand ingenuities to call her back to life; but

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the little looking-glass he held so persistently to her lips remained to the end untarnished by a breath. We were compelled at last—though God knows how reluctantly—to give up all hope; and laying her gently in the Chinaman's berth, we covered her beautiful face. Then I took occasion to ask Lum why he had prevented Johnny from diving overboard—Johnny who was a powerful swimmer and certain to have saved them.

"More better she die," he said; and then, with a dramatic gesture, he pointed to the shore, and asked me in his broken English whether she could have endured a year of it with that man.

"More better she die," he repeated, and regarded me with a deep solemnity.

There was not much dinner eaten that day, though one must needs be cooked and served. I looked fearfully into the trade-room, and saw Frenchy's body stretched out on the counter, a towel drawn over his swarthy face. Lum and I closed the galley doors, and smoked countless cigarettes together in the semi-darkness, finding consolation in one another's company. The tragedy hung heavy upon us both; and the knowledge that one of its victims lay but a yard away seemed to bring death close to us all; so that we trembled for ourselves and sat near together in a sort of horror. Towards three o'clock some one pounded violently at the door, and on Lum's unlocking it, we found ourselves confronted by Johnny the boatswain.

He told us bluntly he wanted the girl's body, to bury it ashore.

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"Captain's orders," he said, with a nasty look at the Chinaman.

"You make two hole?" queried Lum—"two grave?"

"One, that 's all," said Johnny, with a grin. "We bury them together, you China fool."

"No, that you will not!" cried Lum, with a sudden flame in his almond eyes. "You can bury Frenchy, but me and Bence make hole for the girl."

"No, you won't," cried Johnny, making a movement to force his way in; but Lum caught up the cleaver, and stood there, looking so incensed and defiant that the Kanaka was glad to move away. He went off, swearing all kinds of things, and we saw him afterwards complaining angrily to Old Bee.

But the Chinaman was in a fighting humour. It would have taken more than mere words to cow his spirit. He called me out on deck, and there, between us, we got the dinghy off the beds and launched her alongside the ship—without asking by your leave or anything—and pulled her round to the gangway ladder. Then, as I held her fast with the boat-hook, Lum went back, and reappeared a minute later with Elsie's corpse in his arms. Settling it carefully in the bottom of the boat, her comely head resting on a bundle tied in yellow silk, the Chinaman took one of the oars and bade me pull with the other. Even as I did so I noticed the meat-cleaver bulging out his jumper and a six-shooter in the hind pocket of his jeans.

We headed for the shore about a mile above the settlement, and made a landing in a shallow cove. My

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companion lifted out the girl's body and waded with it ashore, carrying the yellow bundle by his teeth like a dog. I followed him in silence as he passed into the scrub and tramped heavily towards the weather side of the island. We emerged on a wide and glaring beach, on which, as far as the eye could reach, a furious surf was thundering. Lum laid his burden down beneath the shade of a palm, and set himself to dig a grave with the cleaver. As he toiled the sweat rolled off him in great beads and his saturated clothes stuck to him as though he had been soaked in water. Once or twice he rested, wiping his hands and face on my handkerchief, and smoking the cigarette I rolled for him. It must have been a couple of hours before the grave was finished to his liking, for he was particular to have it deep and well squared. Then he opened the little bundle that had served so long for Elsie's pillow, and took from it a roll of magenta-coloured silk, some artificial flowers, a packet of sweet-smelling leaves, and a number of red tissue-paper sheets printed with gilt Chinese characters. The silk he used to partly cover the bottom of the grave; the flowers and fragrant leaves were placed at the end where her head would lie; and all being thus ready for her last bed, the two of us lowered her sorrowfully into it. This done, Lum shrouded her in the remnant of the silk, and we filled up the grave together, shovelling the sand in with our hands.

Lum took the pieces of red tissue-paper, and laid some on the ground to mark the place, pinning a dozen more to the neighbouring shrubs and trees,

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where they fluttered in the boisterous trade. Some got away altogether and went scudding along the beach or out to sea, and one blew high in the air like a kite. Lum watched them for a while in silence, and then, with a sigh, turned about to recross the island.

"A week ago she little thought this would be her end," I said, half to myself.

I shall never forget the look Lum gave me. The self-reproach and shame of it was too poignant for words.

"I think you and me all same coward," he said.

THE DEVIL'S WHITE MAN

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WE were all lying on the floor of Letonu's big house, Tautala and I side by side, our heads both pillowed on the same bamboo. About us on the mats the whole family lay outstretched in slumber, save little Titi, who was droning on a jews'-harp, and my coxswain, George Leapai, who was playing a game of draughts with the chief. The air was hot and drowsy, and the lowered eaves let through streaks of burning sunshine, outlining a sort of pattern on an old fellow who moaned occasionally in his sleep.

"In the White Country," said Tautala, "didst thou ever happen to meet a chief named Patsy?—a beautiful young man with sea-blue eyes and golden hair?"

"What was his other name?" I asked.

Tautala could not recall it, the foreign stutter being so unrememberable. Indeed, she doubted almost if she had ever heard it. "We called him Patsy," she said, "and he used to tell us he was descended from a line of kings."

"Was n't it O' something?" I inquired.

No, she could n't remember. It was long ago, when she was a little child and knew nothing; but she had loved Patsy, and it was a sad day to her when the devil took him.

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"Tell me about it," I said. "I have never heard that *tala*."

"Oh, it is a true story," she said; "for was not my own sister Java married to Patsy, and did I not see it all with my own eyes, from the beginning even to the end? But thou must strengthen thyself to hear it, for it is a tale of sadness."

"I will strive to bear it," I replied.

"Well, it was this way," she began. "Many years ago a steamer reached our bay, and it was neither a man-of-war, nor a trading-vessel, nor a ship of pleasuring; and the hold of it was filled with nothing but rope, miles and miles of rope, all of a single piece like a ball of great string; nor was the least piece of it for sale; no, not even though a ton of coprah were offered for a single fathom. The officers of the ship were most agreeable people, and so polite that, except for the colour of their skins, you would never think them white men at all; and the captain gave my father his photograph, and made for us a feast on board his ship, of sardines and tea, so that we were soon very friendly together and almost like members of one family. Then the captain begged my father's permission to build a little house on the edge of the bay, which was no sooner asked than done; for behold, it was in measured pieces for the building. Farther inland, near the old *vi*-tree, another house was raised, this also of boards previously cut and prepared. Then the end of the big rope was carried to the beach-house in a boat, and made fast to all manner of strange *tongafiti* within, some that ticked like clocks, and others that

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went 'whir, whir,' like a bird with a broken wing. Here, in the middle of it all, a shining chair was prepared for Patsy to sit in and a big desk for Patsy to write at. But to the inland house was brought his bed, and countless cases of sardines and pea-soup, and all the many things needed for the comfort and well-being of a white man.

"When all was thus ready to the captain's liking, he blew his whistle and sailed out of the bay, leaving Patsy singly to take care of the end of the big rope. This Patsy did with assiduity, so that there was never a morning but found him sitting beside it, and seldom an afternoon or evening he did not visit it at intervals. Sometimes the rope would hold him there the whole night, saying without end, 'click, click, whir, whir,' as its manner was, so that I would fall asleep with the light of Patsy's lamp in my eyes, and wake again at dawn to find it still burning; and if we went down to the shore, as we often did at first in our curiosity, we would see the white man lying asleep in his chair, his cold pipe on the table beside him. People asked one another the meaning of a rope so singular, and wondered ceaselessly as to the nature of Patsy's concern with it. From all the villages expeditions came in crowded boats to behold the marvel with their own eyes, so that they, too, might hear it say 'click, click, whir, whir,' as its manner was, and stare the while at Patsy through the window. Songs were made about the rope, some of them gay, others grave and beautiful, with parables; it became a proverb hereabouts to say 'as long as Patsy's rope,' meaning a

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thing without end, as the perpetual crying of a child, or the love of a maid for a man.

"Thou must not think, Siosi, that Patsy was not often asked the reason of his strange employment, and a thousand questions besides about the wonderful rope; but at first he knew nothing of our language, and when people would point at it and say, 'click, click, whirl, whirl,' in mockery of what it uttered continually, Patsy would only smile and repeat back to them, 'click, click, whirl, whirl,' so that nothing was accomplished. But he was so gentle and well-mannered, and so generous with his property, that one could hardly count him a white man at all; and those who had at first mistrusted his presence in our village began soon to love him like a relation. No music-box was sweeter than his voice, and often on a moonlight night the whole village would gather round his house to hear him sing, or to see him dance hornpipes on his verandah.

"One day, in a boat from Safotulafai, there arrived a native of this island who had long been absent, sailing in the white men's ships. This man being, of course, familiar with the white stutter, it occurred to Nehemiah the pastor (who had long been troubled by the matter of the rope) that here, at last, was the means of learning the truth from Patsy. Whereupon a meeting of the village chiefs was summoned in the house of Nehemiah; and after a great deal of speech-making it was determined to wait on Patsy in a body, Tomasi, the seaman, going with them to interpret.

"Patsy was at his usual place beside the big rope,

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smoking his pipe and hearkening to the voice as it said 'click, click, whir, whir,' as its manner was. My father, Letonu, was the first to speak; then Nehemiah the pastor; Tomasi translating every word, as had been previously agreed. They both asked for an explanation of the great rope, and why it had been made fast to our island, and where it went to underneath the sea, and the reason of its continually saying 'click, click, whir, whir.'

"Patsy took some thought to answer, and when at last he spoke, his words overwhelmed every one with astonishment and fear. It seemed that the devil was afraid that our village was becoming too good; for being himself so busy in Tonga and Fiji and the White Country, he could not give our place the proper oversight; and was mortified to see that every Aunu'u dead person went straight to heaven. Thereupon he had run this cable from hell, and had hired Patsy for a hundred dollars a month to warn him when anything bad was happening. Patsy explained that the great rope was like a dog: one pinched his tail here and he barked there; thus signals were exchanged, as had been earlier agreed upon, so that two barks meant A, and three meant B, and so on through the *ala-fapeta*.

"Then Nehemiah asked him in a trembling voice (for horror of the devil was upon them all) how dared he serve the Evil One for the sake of a few dollars this month and that, thus imperilling his own immortal soul for ever. But Patsy answered that the White Country was cold and barren, and fuller of men than

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our beach of grains of sand. He said that the lands, such as they were, belonged only to a few, and those who possessed none must needs seek a living where they could, or die of hunger in the road. All this was borne out by Tomasi, who himself had seen old white chieftainesses begging for food in the White Country, and little children perishing unrelieved. Patsy said that when a man was wanted to do a thing for hire, a hundred offered themselves only to be turned away, so great was the misery of the White Country, so mean the hearts of those who were rich. Whereupon, said Patsy, he had been glad to take the devil's money and do the devil's work, for other choice there was none.

"Then said Letonu, my father, 'Patsy, thou must leave the devil and cease to do his bidding; and though we have no hundred dollars, we can give thee, here in Aunu'u, everything else the heart of man desires: *taro*, breadfruit, yams, pigs, *valo*, squid, and chickens, wild doves in their season, and good fish for every day of the year; and I will take thee to be my son, to live with me in my fine house and share with me everything I possess.'

"But Patsy only shook his head, and the rope, seemingly terrified lest it were about to lose him, began to click convulsively and without ceasing. Patsy kept hearkening to it while he listened also to my father, which he did with a divided face, like one hearing two voices at once. He said he thanked my father very much for his kindness, but the fact was, he liked the devil, who was now to him almost a member of his

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own family, and unfailing with the money, one hundred dollars this month and that. Then Nehemiah made another speech, full of piety and warning, and thereupon finding that nothing could turn Patsy's rock-like heart, he rose slowly to his feet and led the party out of doors. There a new discussion took place, the pastor proposing to kill Patsy that night and burn down his house; my father resisting him and saying that he would permit no harm to come to his friend the white man, whether he belonged to the devil or not.

"I don't know how it was, but from the day of that meeting Patsy began greatly to love my father, and half his time he spent in our house and near him, so that the neighbours marvelled about it and were crazed with envy. He gave my father a black coat to wear on Sundays, and cartridges for his gun, and nightly they took lessons together in our language, Letonu teaching him to say our words, while Patsy wrote them down on a sheet of paper. Nehemiah preached against us in the church, and would have stopped my father's communion ticket, but Letonu said he would shoot him, if he did, with both barrels of his gun.

"One day my sister Java returned from Savalalo, where she had been living in the family of my uncle. She was a girl beautiful to look at, and so tall and graceful that there was not a young man in the village but whose heart burned at the sight of her. Of them all Patsy alone seemed not to care; and in the evenings, when his devil work was done and he would

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romp with us on the mats or talk with my father about foreign countries, he never had as much as a glance for my sister; while she, on her side, treated him always with disdain, and often kept away from the house when she knew him to be there. I think Patsy must somehow have found this out, for one night he told us that he would never come back again, as Java hated him; and he kissed us all, and departed sorrowfully into the darkness. After that, when he was not busy in the devil-house, he took long walks into the bush with his gun, or sat solitary on his verandah, reading a book; at night he sang no more, nor danced hornpipes, but read and read with a sad face, like a person who mourned a relation.

"We were angry with Java for having driven Patsy away, and told her to go back to Savalalo and let us have our darling; but she seemed not to care for what we said, and only answered that she hoped never to see the devil's white man again. My father, who loved Patsy, was greatly vexed with her, though he said little at first, thinking that our friend would soon return and that Java would grow ashamed. But when day after day passed and he stayed away continually, my father talked to Java with severity, and bade her go down to the devil-house and ask Patsy's pardon for her wickedness. She was very loath to obey, and only went at last when Letonu threatened to send her lashed like a pig to a pole, and pretended to call his young men together for that purpose. I was told to go with her, for thou knowest our custom forbidding a young girl to go anywhere alone, lest people should talk and

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take away her reputation. But I felt sorry for Patsy as I walked behind my sister down the path to his house, for she carried herself defiantly, and there were tears of anger in her beautiful eyes.

"We found Patsy sitting, as usual, in the devil-house, the great rope tail clicking at his elbow with messages from hell; and though he sprang up smiling when Java opened the door, I thought his face looked sad and changed. She bade me stay outside, and as she seated herself in Patsy's chair and began to explain the errand on which she had come, I could see that her lips were trembling. For a long time I heard them talking in low voices, and then, growing weary of waiting, I fell asleep on the warm door-step. I do not know how long I slept, but when I at last awoke I could still hear the unceasing murmur of their voices inside the room, sweet and soft, as of pigeons cooing in the mountains. I turned the knob of the door and went in; and there, to my astonishment, I beheld my sister in Patsy's arms, her head buried in his breast, her hands clasped thus about his neck, while he was talking foolishly like a mother to her nursing child. At the sight of me they sprang apart, laughing loudly like children at play; and when I asked Java if she had given her message, they both laughed more than ever and caught each other's hands.

"On our return, Java asked me to say nothing of what I had seen; and told me, in answer to my questions, that Patsy had been secretly breaking his heart for her, though she had never known it; and that she, no less, had been delirious for the love of him. She

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said, too, that he was the most beautiful man in the world, and wise and good above all others, and that her love for him was so great that it almost choked her. When I spoke doubtfully of the devil, she said that was all a *pepelo*, a joke of Patsy's; that the rope was what she called a *telenafu*, which ran under the sea from one country to another, telling the news of each. She said that Patsy had explained everything to her, and had even shown her the little pots of thunder and lightning with which the *telenafu* was controlled.

"It was not long after this that Patsy and Java were married by the pastor Nehemiah, my father giving them a wedding feast the like of which had never before been seen in Aunu'u, so innumerable were the pigs, so gorgeous the fine mats and offerings. Java went to live in the inland house, and wore a gold ring on her finger and new dresses every day. Patsy gave her another sewing-machine in the place of the old one; and a present of two chests for her clothes; and every day she ate sardines and salt beef like a white person. At first she was pleased with everything, and her face was always smiling with her happiness; but as days grew on she began to tire of the white way,—which, as thou knowest, Siosi, is relentless and unchanging,—and of the work, which is continual. A daughter of a chief lives easily in Rakahanga, and little is expected of her, for there are girls to wait on her and men to do the heavy labour. Java grew sad in her elegant house, and cared less and less to paint the stove with blacking and wash greasy dishes all day, while the village maids were sporting in the

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lagoon or fishing by torch-light on the reef. She opened her distressed heart to Patsy, and old Ta'a was called in, at a monthly wage of three dollars, to carry the burden of these unending tasks. But old Ta'a was a busybody and a thief, and the lies she said with her tongue were worse to be endured than even the loss of kerosene and rice which took place continually. Every day something was taken, and when Patsy wondered and complained, the old one said the fault was Java's for giving to her family like a delirious person. Were I to get a biscuit, the old one changed it into six; and were Letonu to beg a little tea and sugar for his cough, it became transformed in the telling into many basket-loads. On the other side, Ta'a slowly embittered Java's mind against her husband, telling her that the marriage was no true marriage, and that when Patsy saw a prettier face he would not scruple to cast her off. So the old woman stayed on and thrived, like a fat maggot in a bread-fruit, while Java cried in secret and Patsy grew daily more downcast and silent.

"At last the storm burst which had so long been gathering, and the little house that had been so joyful now shook with the sound of quarrelling voices. Java took her golden ring and threw it on the floor, and with it her golden comb, her much-prized ear-rings, and the brooch which in years gone by had belonged to Patsy's mother in the White Country; she stripped off her dress, her shoes and stockings, even the ribbon from her long black hair; and then, half naked, she returned to our father's house.

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“Letonu was, of course, much concerned, and went down immediately to see Patsy in order to make things smooth again. But the white man was sullen and proud, and would talk of nothing, except that Java could do as she pleased, and that it was the same to him whether she stayed or went. My father, who had been a handsome man in his youth and knew the ways of women, urged Patsy a thousand times to make it up quickly with his wife, telling him to put his arms round her and kiss her and all would be well. ‘Thou mayest know much about the *telenafu*, and how to keep thunder and lightning in pots,’ said my wise father, ‘but assuredly, Patsy, thou art ignorant of the hearts of women.’ He told him that Java was already repentant and ashamed, and, like a person on the top of a high wall, a push would send her either way. But Patsy, like a little sulky child, sat in his chair and refused to speak, while Ta’a rattled the dishes and laughed sideways to herself. It was sad, when my father returned, to see the look that Java gave him. Her hot fit was already past, and her face was full of longing and sorrow; and on his saying that nothing could be accomplished, she lay down on a mat, and remained there all day like a sick person. She lay thus for nearly a week; and if we asked her anything, she would only groan and turn away her head. She was waiting for her man to come to her; but to him there was no such intention; for he stayed shut up in the devil-house, or wandered uselessly in the bush by himself.

“At last she got up, more dead than living, so thin

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she was and changed ; and calling for food, she ate with the voracity of a starving person ; and then she bathed, and did her hair with flowers, and put on the poor clothes she had worn as a maid. 'Behold,' she said, 'I am now one of the *auwaluma* and no longer married.' And from that day she who had been the most circumspect girl in the village, and the best behaved, became swiftly a run-wild-in-the-bush, going everywhere unattended, and sitting up with the young men at night, so that people called her a *paumotu*, and her communion ticket was withdrawn.

"Patsy never lacked for news of her down-going, for old Ta'a still kept house for him ; and no tale was ever told of Java but the old one brought it to him, and more also, conceived by her lying heart. Patsy never tried to see his wife or to do anything to bring about peace between them ; and if he passed her in the path he would turn away his head, even if it were night, and she alone with another man. Once, only, he showed that he still remembered her at all, at a time when she was possessed of a devil and like to die ; then he came to our house, and felt her hands, and gave her medicines from a little box, and told my father to do this and that. And when she grew better and able to sit up, he sent us salt beef and sardines for her well-being.

"Now it happened there belonged to Ta'a's family a girl named Sina, a thin, hungry piece with a canoe-nose like a white man's, and a face so unsightly that it resembled a pig's ; and if she went anywhere the children would cry after her, 'Pig-face, Pig-face!'

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like that, so that her name of Sina was forgotten, and even members of her family called her unmindfully by the other. Compared to Java, who was tall and beautiful like a daughter of chiefs, this little Sina was no more than a half-grown child; and when she was stripped for bathing, behold, you could count the ribs of her body. But Ta'a brought her every day to Patsy's house, so that by degrees he became accustomed to the sight of her; and all the time the old one kept telling him that the little Pig-face loved him—which, perhaps, indeed was true, for none of our young men ever looked twice her way, except to laugh, and she might have stayed out all night and no one would have thought to speak against her character. Patsy was kind and gentle to her, as he was to every one save poor Java; and the little Pig-face followed him like a dog, and lay at his feet at night, while he read and read on his front verandah. So slavish was her soul that she would have kissed his feet if he had kicked her, and nothing pleased her so much as to sit beside him when he slept and keep the flies from off his face. In the end, of course, there happened that which Ta'a had long been planning: Patsy took the little Pig-face to live with him, and pacified her father with two kegs of beef and fifteen silver dollars.

“When the news reached Java she was consumed with a frightful anger, and spoke wildly and murderously, like a drunken white man, clenching her fists and kicking with her legs. She set to sharpening a knife upon a stone, and we saw that she meant to cut off

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the little Pig-face's nose ; for, as thou knowest, Siosi, such is our custom here when one woman wrongs another. She called together all the old ladies of the family, and they took counsel with one another in a secret place, arranging between them a scheme for Sina's capture. But the little Pig-face was cowardly beyond anything ever before known ; she bathed not, neither did she wash nor walk about, but lay all day, trembling and noisome, at Patsy's feet. Once, indeed, she was nearly caught, when upward of a month had passed and she had grown careless in her watching. In the middle of the night the house was set on fire, and as the two rushed out in confusion, Sina was seized in the arms of a dozen women. Had it not been for the darkness, which made seeing difficult, her canoe-nose would have been swiftly lost to her ; but for light they had need to drag her to the burning house, she screaming the while like a hundred pigs. Patsy knew instantly what was happening, and began to fire his pistol in the air as he ran to his partner's help, giving no thought at all to his perishing house. It was well for the little Pig-face that he did so, for the knife had already sunk below the skin, and a twist would have left her noseless.

“As for the house, it burned and burned until nothing was left of it, though the most of what it held was carried out in safety. The next morning Patsy moved everything down to the devil-house, making of it a fort, with a high fence of wire all round, full of barbs and points for the lacerating of flesh. And the little Pig-face, with her nose tied up in cloths, ran this way

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and that, helping him with nails, while Java and I lay in a hiding-place and counted her ribs.

"Thou wouldst have thought that Java might now have rested in her anger, for Patsy's house was consumed and her rival had felt the sharp edge of her knife. But there was no appeasing Java's heart; and wicked though she was herself, and misconducted, she still could not endure to be supplanted by another. My father spoke to her with severity, saying that she had done all that our custom demanded, and that there must now be peace and forgetting. But the blood came hotly into her face, and she answered not a word, nor made the least sign to obey Letonu's words. Then I saw with a certainty that the war with Sina, far from being finished, was only just beginning; and my body quivered all over with the fear of what was to come.

"For a long time, however, Java did nothing, and went about as usual, seeming to take no further thought. The old women of the family returned to their ordinary occupations, and no longer lay banded in places where Sina might pass. It would have mattered nothing if they had, for the little Pig-face stuck to her house like a barnacle to a rock; and except on Sundays, when she went to church between Patsy and Ta'a, we never saw the least hair of her head. But Java knew of means more potent than knives for the undoing of a worthless person, and she sought out Malesa, the old wizard of Aleipata, to whom one went ordinarily for love-philters and medicines. For a dollar he gave Java a curse on a sheet of paper, and

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told her to nail it to the church door on the following Sunday. This she did, to the great indignation of Nehemiah and the elders, though to no purpose so far as concerned the little Pig-face, who happened that day and all the Sundays after to keep away from church, like a heathen in the Black Islands. For what worth is a curse if thy enemy reads it not, nor goest even near the door on which it is placed? Is it not like firing a bullet in the air, hurting nothing?

"So Java returned again to Malesa the wizard, and, for lack of better gifts, she carried with her the sewing-machine she had possessed before her marriage. But the old man said he must have more, and spoke like one delirious, of a hundred dollars and a boat; and when she cried out, he laid his skinny hand on her shoulder and looked a long time into her eyes, and then turned the wheel of the sewing-machine to show that it was broken. But Java's heart was stronger than a man's and full of hatred; so instead of shrinking back, as most women would have done, she told him boldly to name some other price, thinking, perhaps, to give a finger, as Fetuao had done when her husband was perishing with the measles.

"'Thy long, curly hair,' said Tingelau, slowly, 'and I will make of it a head-dress for my son.'

"'I will give thee that and more, also,' said Java, with the tears in her eyes, for there was to her nothing so beautiful as her hair.

"Then, behold, a strange thing happened, for as she knelt before the wizard and undid the knot of her hair, letting it tumble over her bosom like a cascade,

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the old man touched it not with the scissors in his hand, no, not even cutting so much as a single hair.

“‘Java,’ he said, ‘thou art too beautiful to mar. Some other girl must provide a head-dress for my son, and thou shalt return perfect as thou camest; though I shall retain the sewing-machine for my pains, and from time to time, without fail, thou shalt give me a silver dollar until five be reached. And for this small, insignificant reward I shall prepare thee a curse the like of which no wizard ever made before—a curse which beside the other shall be as a man to a child, so that the whole world shall tremble and the dead turn in their graves.’

“Accordingly, in three days my sister returned to Aleipata, where old Malesa, faithful to his word, handed her the curse he had been so assiduously preparing. Ah, Siosi, the reading of it was enough to make one's blood run cold, and palsy the hand that held the written sheet. The little Pig-face was cursed outside and inside, in this world and the next world, part by part, so that nothing was forgotten, even to the lobes of her ears and the joints of her toes. There was nothing of her but what was to be scorched with fire, torn away with pincers, scratched, pierced, and destroyed with pointed sticks; lo, she would scream for death while the sharks fought for her dismembering flesh and squid sucked out her eyes, no one being at hand to give her the least assistance. Java smiled as she read the curse aloud, and took counsel with Tu, the brave and handsome, who had agreed to nail it to Patsy's door.

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"It was black night when Tu made the attempt, holding the paper in his mouth like a dog as he climbed the scratching wall of wire. At every moment Java and I expected to hear the explosion of a gun or some sudden sound of awakening from within the devil-house; yet nothing reached our ears but the beating of our own anxious hearts. After a long while we heard Tu whispering in the darkness beside us, and our first thought was that he had failed. But we were wrong, for Tu had succeeded in every way, and that with the utmost secrecy and skill. Then we went and lay behind a big bush about a hundred fathoms inland of the house, so that we might see with advantage what was to happen in the morning; and Java and I petted Tu, and talked to him sweetly, for he had a brave heart, and his handsome body was everywhere torn with the points of wire.

"*Panga!* Siosi, never was a dawn so slow to come as the one we then waited for, nor any so bitter and chill. Our teeth clicked in our heads, and though we lay closer together than a babe to its nursing mother, or soldiers to one another in the bush, we nearly died with the cold, like people in the White Country. When at last the sun rose in a haze like that of blood and smoke commingled, we felt, indeed, that the curse was already at work; for the air turned sultry beyond all believing, so that we breathed suffocatingly, and endured the taste of matches in our throats and mouths. Tu said prayers—very good prayers and long, which he had learned in the missionary college before he had been expelled; all of them about the

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beauty of holiness and well-doing. But Java attended to none of these things, nor seemed to care whether we ourselves lived or died, for her eyes were ever on Patsy's house.

"Patsy himself was the first to come out, leaving the door open behind him, so that the curse was unluckily hidden from his view. He had clubs in his hands, which he twirled in the air as his manner was every morning for the strengthening of his arms. After a few movements he called out to the little Pig-face, saying, 'Sina, Sina,' like that. 'Come out to thy work, thou idle one.' Thereupon she too appeared, rubbing her eyes, and in her hands were two clubs like those of Patsy's. But instead of leaving open the door, as her partner had done, she closed it with a push of her hand, and lo, the curse shone white upon it like a splash of lime on a dark cloth. At the sight of it she shrieked to Patsy, and together, side by side, they read what was there written, clinging to each other with fainting hearts.

"When Patsy had read it to an end, he uttered a great, mocking laugh, and struck the paper with his club, so that the whole house shook, and old Ta'a came tumbling out like a scared rat. Then he laughed again until the whole bay reëchoed round, and every time he laughed his voice grew more shrill and screaming, like that of a woman in a fit. But there was no laughter at all in the little Pig-face, who went and lay down in the sand, hiding her eyes with her hands. And old Ta'a, the thief, the evil-hearted, the out-islander, she tore down the curse with derisive shout-

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ings, and danced on it a shameful dance which is prohibited by the church. But for all that, we could see that she and Patsy were greatly discountenanced, as well they might have been; for who could read such a curse without trembling, or regard with calm the smoky air now thick with the smell of matches? As for the little Pig-face, she was helped inside the house like a drowning person from the sea, for her legs would no longer carry her, and she could not breathe for very terror. The clubs were left untouched where they had fallen; and when Patsy and Ta'a had carried Sina into the devil-house they shut the door and locked themselves within.

"I don't know how long it was after this that we lay still spying from our *tī'a*, but it seemed to me like the space of many hours. For my part, I should have gladly returned home, for I was gnawed with hunger, and stiff with the cold night watching; so also was Tu, who spoke piteously of his love for Java, and how it might be the means, through this lawless dabbling with the unseen world, of cutting him off in his prime. But so rock-like was Java's heart, so fierce the flame of her revenge, that she had no compassion for this beautiful young man, nor a single word for the comfort of his spirit. With her burning eyes fixed on Patsy's house, she lay motionless on the ground like a dead person, her only thought to see the curse accomplished.

"Suddenly we were startled by a peal of thunder; low at first, and then tumultuously rising, which, with repeated explosions like those of cannon, seemed to

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shake the island to its bottommost roots. We jumped to our feet, clinging wildly to one another, while the earth shook under us like the sea, and the skies above were rent with a thousand burstings. Even as we stood there, swaying and horror-stricken, I felt Java's fingers tighten on my arm and heard her voice in my ear, crying, 'Look, look!' And behold! what did I see but Patsy's house rising in the air and darting seaward at the tail of the great rope, which, hand over fist, the devil was now pulling in from hell. The rope was covered with long, green sea-grass, and all manner of curious shells, which sparkled and twisted in the sun; and it went thus in jumps, like the crackling of a mighty whip; and with every jerk the house skimmed forward like a boatswain-bird, showing us at a broken window the faces of the accursed, who with frenzied movements climbed the one above the other, striving to escape like a tangle of worms in a pot, each one pushing away the other, until at last the water closed over them all. And from that day to this, Siosi, nothing has ever been seen of Ta'a, nor of Sina, nor of the devil's white man."

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“**G**OD has sent you to the right place here,” said Father Studby, solemnly, to the lay brother. “Life in Lauli’i flows in the same channel, day by day, year by year, so that we wonder to grow old and are surprised to see our changing faces in the glass. When we think, it is of the goodness of God; when we fear, it is for the sick or for the machinations of the Evil One. Our little bay is a monastery, remote from all the passions and fevers of mankind; and the people we live among are pleasant children, naïve, gay, and pious.”

“You must not consider me a sick man,” said Brother Michael, with his dark smile. “I am worn out with teaching, and the hot bustle of Nukualofa. The doctor said I needed rest, that I needed peace and fresh air, and the bishop has sent me here to get them.”

“In Nukualofa,” said the old priest, who entertained a partisan’s contempt for the neighbouring island, “in Nukualofa they do not know the meaning of those words. They exist in a frenzy of excitement, amid the intrigues of three conflicting nationalities; one’s ear is dinned with rumours; and one wearies with the very names of consuls and captains. One cannot take a walk without beholding a fresh proclamation on a cocoanut-tree, or turn round without offending

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some preposterous regulation. The natives wear trousers and drink whisky; they model themselves on the dissolute whites set over them, and degenerate as rapidly as their masters."

"I never could see what people found to like in the natives," said the lay brother. "I dare say they are good enough in their way, and fill a necessary place in the world, but to me they are greasy and offensive."

"Ah, but you have never seen the true Samoan," exclaimed the priest. "Here it is so different from Nukualofa. Here our people are better born; here they are self-respecting, honest, and kind; here you will see at once an astonishing contrast to those you have left."

Once launched on his favourite topic, the superiority of Lau'i'i to all the villages of the group, the old missionary knew not when to stop, and his interminable tongue ran on in an unceasing harangue. The new-comer listened with a sort of detachment, as he might have done to some strange parrot screaming in a zoo, assenting by perfunctory nods to that long tale of Samoan virtue, religion, and generosity. His black eyes ranged about the room and through the open window at its back, where, within a distance of a dozen yards, a little church half barred the vista of peaks and forest. Still talking, Father Studby led him away to see it, this scene of his professional life which had been raised, stone upon stone, by his own assiduous hands. The lay brother was shown the altar, with its artless decoration of tissue-paper flowers; the pulpit inlaid with pearl-shell; the sacramental vessels in

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their wrappings of tapa-cloth. The father seated himself at a crazy harmonium, which was planted on the sandy floor like some derelict cast up by the sea, and ran his fingers over the yellow keys. He played, after a manner, with considerable skill and vivacity, his preference being for the sentimental ballads of his youth, and the dance-music which had then been in fashion. It was strange to hear these old waltzes, so long dead and forgotten, coming to life again in that darkened chapel and from the hands of such a player. The lay brother leaned against an open window, from which there was a wonderful view of wooded mountains half screened in mist, and sighed moodily as he gazed about him. Under the spell of those swaying measures, his heart returned to the Australian plains where he had been born, and he felt himself, indeed, an exile.

On leaving the church, the father took him on a little tour of the garden : showed him the cemented oven where the bread was baked, the roofed-in spring, the hives, the cow, the imported cock, everything, in fact, down to the grindstone and the rusty scythe.

Michael followed as in duty bound ; asked the proper questions ; showed everywhere a becoming interest ; endured it all with propriety. He asked his host many questions, some of them the inspiration of mere politeness, such as the best food for chickens, and the precautions to be taken in handling bees ; others, in which he seemed more genuinely concerned, as to the nature of the inland country and its resources. He was surprised to hear that the island

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had only once been crossed by whites; he was impatient of the priest's statement that it did not greatly matter, as the natives suffered in social consideration by living too far from the sea, and were, besides, better off for the fish it afforded and the easy means of communication.

"There are other things in Samoa besides Samoans," exclaimed Brother Michael, with a disdain that he could but ill conceal. "Here is an island scarcely forty miles wide, which apparently has only once been crossed in the memory of living man. Why, the thing stirs the imagination; it makes the blood tingle in one's veins; it makes one speculate on a thousand possibilities. In those secluded depths there may be the ruins of ancient cities; mouldering tombs covered with hieroglyphs; perhaps even another race still surviving in those inner valleys! There may be whole forests of sandalwood, beds of fine coal, deposits of rich ores. Who knows, but there may be gold!"

Father Studby crossed himself.

"God forbid," he said.

"You must remember," he went on, "that every village has some knowledge of the land behind it, and if you could combine what they know you would find that the interior is not such a mystery as you imagine; though, of course, there may be tracts which have never yet been penetrated by a white man. At one time and another I have been many miles inland of Lauli'i, but I never got so far but what every gully had a name, every acre an owner. Why our people should

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dispute among themselves for such blocks of worthless forest and rock is a thing beyond my comprehension; but as a matter of fact they do attach an inordinate value to them, and it would astound you to find how exactly the boundaries are remembered."

"You interest me immensely," said the lay brother. "I see that you can tell me everything I want to know, and I congratulate myself again that my lucky star has brought me to your door. In Nukualofa they could not answer half my questions."

"In Nukualofa," said Father Studby, bitterly, "they know nothing,—less than nothing,—for they mislead you and tell you lies. The natives there, besides, are of a low stock, interbred with out-islanders and without an ancestry among them. You will look in vain for such a man as our Maunga, who goes back seventeen generations to the legendary Fasito'o, or a family such as the Sā Satupaialā, who have what you might almost call a special language of their own. They die, they spit, they moor a boat, they steal breadfruit, they commit adultery, all in different words from those commonly employed. It has been my pleasure, you might almost call it my folly, to absorb myself in such studies. I am afraid you will find me nothing more than an old Kanaka pundit, with my cracked head full of legends and ancient songs."

The priest saw very little of his guest, who followed the doctor's prescription of fresh air with a literalness that made him almost a stranger in the house. Every morning, after participating in the service in the little church, Brother Michael would take his gun

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and disappear for the day, returning at sundown with what pigeons he had shot, and an appetite that played havoc with his host's frugal housekeeping. He would eat a pound of meat at a sitting, make way with an entire loaf of bread, and thought nothing of helping himself four times to marmalade, in spite of the father's disapproving looks, and the calculated contrast of his bare plate. In the light of that frightful inroad on his provisions, Father Studby's good opinion of the stranger began to change into a sentiment approaching aversion, and it seemed to him an added injury that the young man would no longer eat his own pigeons, insisting, with gross self-indulgence, on an unending succession of chicken, ham, and costly preserves. He said that *taro* gave him heartburn, evoked the physician's ban on all native food, and demanded, on the same shadowy authority, a daily ration of brandy from the father's slender stock. It was hard on the old missionary, who was abstemious to a degree and seldom allowed himself the comfort of a dram, to pour his liquor down that insatiable throat, and be condemned to hold the bottle, while the other smacked his lips like a beach-comber in a bar, in no wise ashamed to drink alone. The bottle, too, until it was placed under lock and key, showed a tendency to decline unduly, and even biscuit and sardines were not exempt from a similar and no less exasperating shrinkage. And then, in his religious exercises the lay brother betrayed a disheartening coldness, and what spiritual fire had ever been in him seemed smothered over

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with torpor and indifference. His vocation meant no more to him than a means to live. He yawned at mass, nodded intermittently through the priest's interminable sermons, and when it was proposed that he should take temporary charge of the school he did not hesitate for a moment to refuse.

Of course, a word to Nukualofa would have speedily rid Father Studby of his guest; he had only to write, to expostulate, and the thing was done. More than once, under the influence of some particular indignation, he had set himself to the task. But he had never got beyond the first few lines before his natural generosity reasserted itself. Who was he, that he should make himself the young man's judge; that he should help, perhaps, to mar prospects none too bright, and throw the last stone at one already tottering to his fall? Besides, were the grounds of his objection as sincere as he imagined? Was he not meanly condemning the lay brother for his appetite, for the hole that he was making in that dwindling larder, rather than for his lack of religious conviction which at times seemed so shocking? After all, was it not natural for a young man to eat well, to help himself unchecked to marmalade, to devour expensive tinned meats like a wolf? It was the result of those immense walks, ordered by the doctor, to which Michael so assiduously applied himself. Was there not something even admirable in so strict an obedience to hygiene, especially in one constitutionally slothful and self-indulgent?

One afternoon Michael returned from his walk in a state of high excitement. His black eyes were burn-

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ing, and for once, contrary to his usual habit, he was extraordinarily noisy and talkative. He kept breaking out into wild laughter, even when not a word was said, and seemed to possess, buried somewhere within him, the secret of an unextinguishable entertainment. Instead of dozing after supper in his chair, he grew, if anything, wider awake than ever, and his hilarity continued with a kind of violence. Father Studby was carried off his feet by that wave of gaiety; he felt the contagion of that singular fever which had so transformed his companion; he, too, laughed at nothing, and found himself talking with an animation that he could not remember to have displayed for years. But with it all he had an unaccountable sense of suspicion, of being on his guard against something, he knew not what, of some pitfall yawning for his unwary feet. He felt that he was watched; that those strange, mocking eyes of his companion were mutely tempting him to evil; at times he almost wondered whether the dark lay brother were not the devil himself.

The young man's talk was rambling and inconsequent, a mere rattle of autobiography, punctuated with laughter. He had much to say of his college days; his penury; his struggles; his shabby make-shifts; the pranks he and his companions had played on the professors. He roared as he recalled them, and hammered the table with his fist. He spoke of his mother and her hard life; the ne'er-do-well father; the brother that drank; the sister with the hip disease. And from that again to the price of native land, the

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way to secure good titles, the need, as he had been told, to buy the same property from a dozen conflicting owners. Then he broke out about the power of money, the unlimited power of money, the lawlessness of money in unprincipled hands ; the way it could buy everything the world had to offer, social position, beautiful women, the entrée to great houses. With money, what could a man ask for in vain ! In this world, he meant, of course—in this world. In the next, thank God, it would be different ; the rich would pay through the nose then for their pleasures. But some of them perhaps would not repent it ; the most would be as bad again, if only the chance were offered ; the dogs would return to their vomit.

Father Studby listened to these confidences with amazement ; they depressed and angered him unspeakably ; they seemed to disclose in his companion a cynicism and a moral deficiency that he had not previously suspected. He felt, too, as he had never felt before, the full horror of that brutal civilisation, so merciless, so inexorable, its obliterating march whitened with the bones of thousands ; everything with its price, even to the honour of shrinking women and the corpses of the dead. If you had no money the wheels rolled over you ; if you had no money you sank and died. There was no one to help, no one to pity ; all were scrambling horribly to save themselves on the shoulders of those below. What a contrast to the calm of that Samoan life, primitive, kindly, and religious, in which accursed money was unknown ! He was led to declaim hotly on the high breeding and chiv-

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alry of these misjudged people, and protested that they had more to teach than to learn. Where, he demanded of the lay brother, could one find such hearts as these? where such brave men and compassionate women? where else a land with neither rich nor poor? Here, if one starved, all starved; here, if need be, the last banana was divided into a hundred pieces; here they would all take shame if a single child went hungry.

The old priest went on and on with his tale of Samoan virtue, of Samoan superiority. God had never made such a people; there was in them the seed that would regenerate the world. There was nothing in which they did not excel. He carried his reluctant hearer into the mazes of native poetry; he repeated hundreds of lines in his resounding voice, blowing out clouds of tobacco smoke between each stanza. Where, he asked, were the whites who could match such things as these; who could bring the tears to your eyes or convulse you with laughter at will? He would repeat that last verse, if his companion did not mind; it described how To, wandering on the sea-shore at dawn, met Tingalau returning from his fishing, and led on to twenty stanzas more of what To said to Tingalau, and Tingalau to To!

Michael lay back in his chair, scarce heeding the soft gibberish that to him meant nothing. He was living in a tumult of his own thoughts—thoughts in which Kanaka poetry had no part, though the priest himself was sometimes present, but whether as a friend or foe he could not yet determine; and while he wondered and conjectured the old man himself

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seemed to disappear in his own smoke, until nothing remained of him but a faint, passionate buzzing, like that of a bumblebee in a field.

The next day Michael was up and gone before day-break, and the little service in the church proceeded for once without him. The father was vexed at such remissness, and tolled the bell with pious indignation. Was the young man no better than a heathen, thus to scamp God's morning hour—to attend so grossly to the fleshly needs and let the soul go wanting? Depend upon it, he had not left without something to stay his stomach, though God's claim on him might wait. The priest turned a cold face to his guest when the latter returned at dusk with the invariable pigeons in his hand. But Michael was too tired to notice these altered looks, nor did he seem concerned when at last his delinquency was pointed out to him in no uncertain words. His church, he answered, with mocking defiance, his church was in the woods, at the foot of a towering banyan, or in some dim recess beside a stream; he knelt when the impulse came to him, like some primitive monk wandering with God in the wilds. The priest received this explanation with a dubious silence; he was not at all satisfied with its truth, and yet scarcely knew what to reply, feeling himself helpless and outwitted. He was almost glad that the pigeons, still lying on the floor, gave him an obvious excuse to leave the room.

"The chief has done well to-day," he said to Ngalo, his servant.

The boy laughed.

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"Excellency," he said, "the Helper does not shoot these pigeons. He buys them for sixpences from our people."

"Impossible!" cried the old man. "Thou talkest like a delirious person."

"Excellency," said the boy, "saving thy presence, the Helper lies. Behold in this pigeon the truth of what I say. Does the chief use gravel in his gun, like a Samoan, to whom there is no lead?"

"Perhaps he does," said the priest. "Such a thing had not occurred to me."

"Perhaps he does *not*," exclaimed Ngalo, meaningly. "On Tuesday he bought eight birds of my mother's brother's son; one was scented and had to be thrown away."

"Ngalo," cried the priest, with a sudden change of tone, "is there a woman in this hidden business? Is there gossip in the village?"

Ngalo shook his head.

"He is blameless of such an evil," he said. "But the village talks continually, and the people ask, 'What does the Helper in the bush?'"

Father Studby breathed a great sigh of relief.

"He walks about," he explained, "this way and that, according to the command of the wise doctor in Nukualofa. The peace refreshes him and makes him well. I, too, in my youth, used to wander in the mountains and find consolation."

Ngalo's face showed that he had more to tell.

"The Helper does strange things," he said. "He goes along, even as you say, through the village and

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the outlying plantations like an uncaring child, with no purpose in what it does. But when he reaches a certain *ifi*-tree on the land we call Lefoa, behold, all is changed. He stops, he looks about, he listens assiduously like a warrior on the outpost. Then he puts his gun in a hidden place, and with it his shot-bottle and his powder-bottle; then he girds up his dress to the knee, and runs into the bush with the swiftness of a dog. When he returns, late in the afternoon, it is with the same quickness until the tree is reached. There he takes breath, composes himself, and with slow steps returns seaward buying what pigeons he can on the road."

"Well, and what else, Mr. Make-the-News?" demanded the father, as Ngalo hesitated.

"There are those in the village who know nothing," he went on, "mere worthless heathen of no family, without consideration or land of their own, living meanly like slaves on the bounty of others, who say strenuously, with the persistency of barking dogs, that the Helper is under the spell of Saumaiafe!"

The priest stamped his foot with anger. Was that superstition never to die? Saumaiafe, the fabled witch, who, in the guise of a beautiful woman, lured men to ruin in the bush! Saumaiafe, that intolerable myth with which he had been combating for more than eighteen years! Saumaiafe!

"Thou art a fool!" he cried. "You are all fools. Sometimes I feel as though I had spent my life in vain. I, too, was a fool to ever think you teachable."

"Your Excellency is right," said Ngalo. "It is an

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unendurable village altogether, and ignorant beyond anything before conceived. Indeed, so weak are men's hearts in this matter of Saumaiafe and the Helper that none now go into the bush, even those who are distressed for bamboo, or for red clay with which to beautify their hair."

The priest turned away without a word. He was almost inclined to laugh as he went back to the other room, and to tell the lay brother the commotion his actions had excited. But the sight of Michael's face somehow daunted him; those suspicious, bloodshot eyes suggested dangers that he was at a loss to name. He remembered the hiding of the gun; the strange deceit about the pigeons; he seemed to see the young man kilting up his cassock and plunging furtively into the dark forest. What did it all mean? he asked himself again and again. Mercy of God, what did it mean?

That night he slept but little. He tossed on his hot bed, and whether he lay on this side or on that, the same question dinned in his ears without cessation. He was tortured by thoughts of hidden wickedness in the bush; mysteries of evil in rocky defiles, in caves beside great waterfalls. He rose and went out into the starlight, reproaching himself for his foolishness; and even as he did so, Brother Michael's even breathing thrilled on his ears like a vindication. When all was said, what was it that he feared for the young man? What could an old priest fear but the one thing—a woman? And what woman, he asked himself, however dissolute or abandoned, would venture alone into those haunted woods? He could

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trust superstition to keep the wickedest from such a course. Had he indeed become such an old Kanaka, that even he, Father Studby, was to credit the existence of the witch, roving in her naked beauty, a peril to white lay brothers? Perish the thought, so degrading and childish! Assuredly it was not Saumaiafe he had to fear.

He got to bed again, and waited with open eyes for the approach of day. As the cocks began to crow, he heard, with a sudden sinking of the heart, the sound of the lay brother stirring in the next room; heard him dress and go stealthily out, shaking the verandah under his heavy tread.

Mercy of God, what did it all mean?

Morning after morning he asked himself the same question, as the mysterious routine continued with unabated regularity; and the thought of it haunted him persistently throughout the day as he tried to fix his mind on other things. Evening after evening he saw the young man return with his tired face, the pigeons so ambiguously obtained, the gun that had never been fired. They would eat their silent meal together, and then Michael would doze in his chair till bedtime. On Sunday, the only day he remained at home, the lay brother resigned himself to the unavoidable services of religion, going with the father to mass, and assisting, by his presence at least, the cause to which they had both pledged their lives. The few hours of his leisure were spent at a little lock-fast desk; and the nature of this correspondence became the second mystery of his singular and baffling life. Once, looking

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up from his half-written page, he asked the priest how many feet went to a mile. On another occasion he inquired as to the soundings of the bay, and the most likely point for a steamship pier. Steamship piers, and feet in miles! Miles of what? Whose steamships, and what was there to bring them? Mercy of God, what did it all mean?

In the beginning, when Father Studby had first begun to suspect he knew not what, to worry, to ask himself importunate questions, a way had occurred to him—a way not altogether honourable nor dignified—which could not fail to lead to some elucidation of the mystery. He had put it behind him with decision, as unworthy of himself and his reputation. What! act the spy and follow the young man? See with his own eyes, from the vantage of some thick fern or bush, the nature of that strange tryst? No; let him keep his honour, even if curiosity went unsatisfied—even if that same curiosity were not wholly bad, but inspired by a genuine regard for the young brother's welfare, for which, as the elder of the two, he was in some degree responsible. It was only right to hold out your hand to a sinking man. But could the lay brother be called a sinking man? Ah, if one could be sure of that, how much might be pardoned!

One morning Father Studby could bear it no longer. As the boards creaked in the next room, he, too, rose and dressed himself, trembling as he did so with a sense of guilt. When the front door at length closed on the lay brother, and his quick step was heard on the path outside, Father Studby found himself on

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the verandah, looking after him in the dawn. He would have followed; he even took a few steps down the hill. But the folly of such a course was at once apparent. To act the detective, one must one's self remain undiscovered. Yet how could he hope to elude observation and keep on Brother Michael's heels all through the open village and the wide *malae*? It was manifestly impossible. In the forest it might be different; yes, in the forest, crouching in the thick undergrowth, it would not be so hard to track a man down.

The next night, which happened to be one of a moon almost full, the father lay down ready dressed for a new adventure. A little after one o'clock, he rose, crossed himself, and cautiously quitted the house, making his way through the sleeping village to the path across the swamp. This he followed, slipping on the sodden tree-trunks that served as bridges, until he attained the farther region of cocoanut, banana, and breadfruit plantations. These were in a choking tangle of weeds and lianas; trees thirty feet in height bent under their weight of parasites; others, still higher, were altogether overwhelmed and lost to view in a wall of green; and in the forks of the giant breadfruits orchids were sprouting like the scabs of some foul disease. Keeping with difficulty on the half-obliterated track, the priest toiled slowly and painfully through this belt of so-called cultivation, from which, indeed, the village drew no considerable portion of its sustenance, until at last he reached the welcome shelter of the forest. In contrast to the zone through which he had just emerged, opened by man to the

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furious energy of the sun, the forest floor itself, densely shaded from this fecundating fire, was comparatively open and easy to penetrate. It was dark, of course, dark as the inside of a well; and the father stopped and lighted the lantern he carried in his hand. He peered about him, blinded by the glare, and uncertain for the first time as to his road. Yes, he had not been misguided; he could trust the instinct of eighteen years to steer him through these labyrinths. Here, indeed, was the *ifi*-tree of which Ngalo had told him, with its low, spreading foliage that had so often concealed Michael's gun. At the thought of the lay brother his heart began to beat, and he crossed himself repeatedly.

He paced off seven, eight, nine, ten yards from the trunk of the *ifi*; and his feet at that distance carried him into a thicket of fern and wild bananas. He blew out the lantern, and settled himself in the damp ambush so providentially at hand, drawing the big leaves over his head until he could no longer see the stars. From two o'clock—for such he judged the hour when he first took up his station in the ferns—from two o'clock till five he remained huddled in his green lair, praying at intervals, and counting the interminable minutes to dawn. With the first peep of day his impatience turned no less swiftly into dread. What had tempted him to such madness, such dishonour? What if he should be discovered in this shameful nest, and incontinently revealed to the jeers and laughter of the man he thought to track down? What if the lay brother, turning a little aside, should stumble

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over his cramped and aching body? Explain? How could he explain? Mercy of God, what a position for an old religious! He underwent spasms of panic; he was of two minds whether or not to rise and run. But the sound of a footstep, of a man's hoarse breathing, of rustling branches and snapping twigs, suddenly brought the heart to his mouth. The wild animal in him was instantly on the defensive, and he flattened himself to the ground.

He lay like a log, not moving so much as an eyelash. He heard the ring of metal as Michael apparently fumbled with his gun in the lower branches of the *ifi*-tree. The shot-flask fell with a crash, and the brother swore—yes, said “damn” audibly, and picked it up. Then there was a silence; an eternity of suspense; then a faint crackling as of parting boughs. The father peeped out, and saw a black figure disappearing inland; an unmistakable black figure, bent and furtive, speeding mysteriously through the gloom. He was up and following in a second, half doubled together, like the man he pursued, eager as a bloodhound with his nose to the spoor. The way, with few intermissions, ran steadily uphill, up and up, faster and faster, until one's side seemed to crack and one's heart to burst. Up and up, with a swing to the right to avoid the splashing waterfalls of the Vaita'i; through groves of *moso'oi* that stifled the air with sweetness; under towering *maalava*-trees that seemed to pierce the very sky.

Would he never stop?

But the lay brother, without once turning, without

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once stopping either to rest or to look back, plunged forward with the certainty of a man who knew his way blindfold. They were, now, pursued and pursuer, on the high ridge between two river valleys; on the one hand was the Vailoloa, a tributary of the Vaita'i, on the other the roaring Fuasou, both racing tumultuously to the sea. The father wondered how Michael meant to extricate himself from such a cul-de-sac, unless (and the thought dashed his hopes to the ground) he intended to assail the cloudy slopes of Mount Loamu itself and make a circuit of a dozen miles.

But his question no sooner suggested itself than it was answered. Of a sudden the brother stopped on the edge of the Fuasou ravine, dropped one leg over, then the other, and began to disappear hand over hand by means of a hidden ladder. The priest stood where he was, transfixed with astonishment. To hurry now seemed unwise. If he had come to ladders he was not improbably near the goal itself. Patience! A breath or two, a moment to cast one's self full length on the ground and wipe the acrid sweat from one's eyes, and then, having given the lay brother a minute's start, to descend the precipice in his wake.

Father Studby approached the brink and looked over. Below him, dropping, perhaps, sixteen feet, was a roughly made ladder of bamboo which rested at the bottom on a rocky buttress of the cliff. On the edge of that, again, with its splintered ends appearing through the trampled undergrowth, was a continuing

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ladder, the second of a series that dropped, one after another, into the deep defile. With guarded steps, and after a prolonged deliberation, the priest let himself slowly down ladder number one; down number two; down number three, which ran so long and straight on the open face of the rock that he faltered, turned dizzy, and had to close his eyes to recover himself; down number four; down number five, at the base of which there descended a zigzag path to the river. Following this unhesitatingly, with the noise of rushing water in his ears, he emerged at last on a basaltic shelf not six feet above the bed of the Fuasou. From this coign of vantage he gazed about in vain for any sight of Michael, until, on creeping to the very edge of the rock, he ventured to look below. There, immediately beneath him, so close, indeed, that he might have touched him with his hand, was the lay brother himself, busy shovelling a bucket full of sand.

"Mercy of God!" exclaimed the priest below his breath; and even as he did so, by that singular telepathy which so often confounds us, Michael lifted his head and looked his pursuer squarely in the face. For an appreciable instant the pair challenged each other's eyes in silence; the lay brother's were kindling and fierce, the priest's all abashed, like those of a girl.

"Come down here," said Michael, peremptorily. "I have something to tell you."

The priest obeyed, with the mien of a man descending to his execution.

"You old interloper," cried Michael, with a mirthless laugh. "So you are here at last, are you? I

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have seen it working in your silly old head for weeks. I never looked up but I thought to see your bloody boots!"

This unexpected address only served to add to the old man's confusion. He looked about him helplessly. Such unrestrained language seemed to call for a sharp rebuke. He was shocked and frightened; as much so as a woman insulted on the street; and yet the consciousness of his own position—that of the detected spy—froze the words of correction on his lips.

"Of course, you want to know what I have been doing here," continued Michael, in his mocking tone. "If you'll look into that cradle you will see quick enough. Why, man alive, don't you know what it is?"

Amazed and ashamed, Father Studby touched the dirty sediment with his finger.

"That 's gold!" cried the lay brother.

The priest hastily withdrew his hand and stared at his companion in consternation.

Gold!

The priest's head went round; his heart thumped in his breast; with that word everything was forgotten—his shame, his anger, his humiliation.

"Oh, Michael!" he broke out incoherently. "Oh, Michael!"

"I am taking out about twenty ounces a day," said the lay brother. "Some days I have touched forty."

"Mercy of God!" cried the old man, hoarsely. "Mercy of God, show me how you do it!"

Michael had another cradle ready to hand. It was the first he had made, he said, and nothing like so good

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as the other; but it would do for a day or two until they made a new one—yes, it would do, though a lot of the finer stuff was lost. You did it this way—so—just rocking it like a baby's cradle; the squares of blanket screened the gold, and you washed them out afterwards in a pan. A place? Oh, anywhere along the stream. It was all rotten with gold.

The priest hurried off, and was soon shaking frantically a hundred yards below. He had not been gone an hour when he came hurrying back to where his companion was still at work.

"Look at that!" he cried, holding out a trembling hand. "Oh, Michael, what is it worth?"

"Three or four pounds, perhaps," said the lay brother, indulgently.

"Mercy of God!" cried the priest, and he was off again at a run.

A little later he came back again. They were watched, he said; he was certain they were watched. He could hardly speak for agitation. He had heard noises behind him, again, and again, like the laughter of girls in the bush.

But Michael only derided his fears. The bush was a creepy place, he said, when you were all alone in it. He had felt the same way himself when he first came, and was eternally peeping over his shoulder and stopping his work to listen. One got used to it after a while; he supposed it must be some kind of a bird.

All day long they worked together in the stream, stopping only at noon for a bite of bread and a pipe. So engrossing was the occupation that one seemed

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never to grow tired ; the glittering reward was always a fresh incentive to try one's luck again. Five pounds, four pounds, six pounds, three pounds ! One lost all count, and the level of the tobacco-tin in which the golden sand was poured rose and rose in half-inch tides. Father Studby was almost angry when his companion declared it was time to go. He was hurt at such a suggestion ; he was disappointed ; he almost cried. Michael showed him his watch. Mercy of God, it was past five o'clock ! Then he remembered, for the first time, his neglected duties : the morning service, the school, the woman who lay dying in Nofo's house ; the hundred calls, great and small, that kept his day so busy. He wondered at his own unconcern, at his own apathy and selfishness. He felt that his contrition lacked the proper sting ; he asked himself whether, indeed, he cared. He was dizzy with the thought of gold, of cradles and rich pockets, of those bright specks that still stuck to his hands. He followed his companion in a sort of dream, silent and triumphant, trying to fasten on himself a remorse that would not come.

"I'll never forget the first time I got into that valley," said Michael, on the long road home. "It was the hardest job of my life to follow up that river. I climbed into places that would have scared a sea-faring man ; and I was no sooner up one than I would have to risk my life shinning up another, hanging on to lianas and kicking for my life. Tired ? Why, I would regularly lie down and gasp—when there was anything big enough to lie on ; and the noise of those

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falls, those that I was on top of, and those that were still to come—my word! it made me sick to hear them. And when I at last got into the place, and sat down by a big pool, and saw the black sand with the shrimps wriggling in it, I simply said to myself, as quiet as that: 'Here 's gold.'"

When they reached home Michael called loudly for brandy. The priest himself was glad of a little after that day of days; placer-mining was a new experience, even to that veteran of labour, and he felt extraordinarily stiff and tired. He remembered with contrition how often in the past he had grudged his companion the stimulant, and he now blushed for those trivial economies with a hot sense of impatience. Could he not take out in a day what they represented in a twelvemonth? With a new-found sense of freedom, he helped himself again to the bottle, and, for once in his frugal life, did not measure the allowance with his thumb. Then Michael, with an elaborate pantomime of secrecy, beckoned him into the other room, and, after shutting and bolting the door, threw open the top of his trunk. Beneath the rumpled heap of clothes there were a dozen tin cans of all shapes, some with their own original covers, others capped with packing-paper like pots of jam. The lay brother opened them one by one, lovingly, exultingly, his face shining with satisfaction. Each was filled to the brim with coarse gold-dust; each weighed down the hand like an ingot.

"Take one, father," said Michael. "It is a little enough return for all your kindness."

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The priest trembled and drew back.

"No, no!" he cried.

"As you like," said Michael, with a tone of affected indifference. "You will be doing as well yourself in a few days."

"God help me!" exclaimed the priest, and buried his face in his hands.

The lay brother looked down at him strangely and said nothing. He knew something of the hidden conflict at that moment raging in the old man's breast, and he had too much at stake himself to venture an incautious word. Everything depended now upon the priest, for good or evil; it lay with him to keep the secret inviolate, or to spread it to all the world; to accept the partnership thus tacitly offered, and allow them both to reap a colossal harvest; or, standing coldly on the letter of his vows, to open the door to a rush of thousands. The brother held his breath and waited for that supreme decision on which so much depended; he was afraid to speak, afraid even to move, as he looked down at his companion in a fever of suspense. The intolerable silence weighed upon him like a nightmare. He felt that it was the enemy of all his hopes; that every minute of it increased the hazard of his fortunes; that he was being tried, that he was being condemned.

"Father," he broke out, "your name need not appear in this; you need do nothing but hold your tongue; you can be my partner without a soul to know it. As God sees me, I will divide with you to the last penny."

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The old man lifted his head.

"I don't know what to do," he said.

"It 's just this," said Michael, regaining a little confidence. "If you spread the news broadcast—and the merest whisper will do that—you will get nothing at all and I will get no more than a beggarly claim. Keep it to ourselves and we shall share tens of thousands of pounds."

"I am a Marist priest," said Father Studby. "I am a missionary. I am an old man nearing the end of my days. My vows prevent me from withholding any property from my Order. I should be acting dishonourably in entering into such an enterprise. I have no right to gain money for myself."

"Who is asking you to keep it for yourself?" demanded Michael. "What prevents you giving your Order every ounce that falls to your share? Do you really think Monseigneur would find fault if you brought him a check for a hundred thousand pounds? And I don't even ask you to keep silence for ever. In six months, or a year, or whatever it is,—when the proper time comes,—you can make a clean breast of it. Of course, if you choose the other thing, your Order will get nothing, and somehow I don't think they will be as pleased as you seem to think. Why, man, think what the money would do for the cathedral! They could build the new mission-house tomorrow. And remember for one moment what you could do here!"

"No," said the father, "you have put the matter in a new light. I should fail in my duty if I let this

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money go from us. They would be right to reproach me if I let the chance slip. I fear I was thinking more of myself than of them."

After supper they drew out their chairs on the moonlit verandah, and sat for a while in silence. The priest was conscious, amid the uneasy preoccupation that settled on him like a cloud, that in some manner their relative positions had changed. The masterful young man, by reason of his great discovery, on the strength, perhaps, of his more vigorous and determined will, seemed now to arrogate to himself the right to lead. It appeared natural to Father Studby to acquiesce in this; to subordinate himself to his companion and wait timidly for him first to speak; even to feel a kind of gratitude for the partnership that caused him such qualms. Self-effacing and humble, it came easy to him to sink to a second place and accept unquestioningly the orders of a superior. Besides, what did he know of gold?

"The first thing we must consider," began Michael, "the first, because it is the most important, is the land. It must all be ours, from the sea to the mountain-tops, from one end of the bay to the other. In a small way I have been already moving in the matter. I have taken options from Maunga, Leapai, and George Tuimaleali'ifano, the three principal chiefs here, for what seems to cover more than the area of the group. I paid them out of hand about twenty dollars each; but the options, to make them good, will call for twenty-eight thousand dollars in Chile money. Oh, it's all perfectly right and legal," he broke out, fore-

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stalling an objection he saw on his companion's lips. "I had the forms drawn up in Nukualofa by a lawyer; it cost me three pounds to do it. The only point is how much of the land really belongs to these chiefs, for there are bound to be half a hundred other claimants whose consent will be needed to make the title good; and it will be your part to ferret them out. What you must bear in mind most is that we must nail every inch of the beach. There will be a city here in a month after the news is out; in a year there will be tramways, and newspapers, and brick banks and churches, and wharves with ships discharging. Don't you see, we must have our fist in all that; we must have the lion's share; every pound the others bring must pay us toll."

"The others!" cried the priest. "Mercy of God, let us keep the thing to ourselves!"

"We could n't, if we would," cried the lay brother. "You might as well try and hide the island as to keep them out. When I was a boy I was in the Kattabelong gold rush with my father, and I know what I am talking about. They rose up like waves in the sea—waves and waves of men, bursting in with yells like an invading army. Why, it won't be any time before we are holding our valley with a line of rifles; you will see all hell loose and a thousand devils landing at a time; you will see the horizon black with steamer smoke, bringing in thousands more; you will see men killed and their bodies rotting in the sun. That 's the first stage of a gold rush—the pioneer stage, the stage of murder and crime, of might for

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right. That will be the time for us to live through as best we can. Bit by bit there comes a subsidence into a kind of order. There is a rally of the better sort; the inevitable leader rises to the top. You walk out one morning, and you run across Billy This, the terror of the camp, swaying peacefully at the end of a rope. At another turn it is Tommy That, with his toes turned up and a ticket on his breast. The third period is the arrival of an official with a tin office and blank forms. Who owns the land here? Why, we do. Who claims that? Why, we claim it. Who owns the beach from a point beginning at such and such a place, to a point marked B on the new official map? We again! Who owns the mountain lakes they talk already of tapping for the water-supply? We do. Who owns everything in sight? The same old firm, if you please, sir. But I am not saying we can hold the fort single-handed. God never made the two men that could. But this is what we do. We grant titles, concessions, half and quarter interests to men of the right stamp, and make them our partners against the mob. We take the money they bring, and reserve a substantial profit in their future undertakings. As I said before, we must have our fist in every pocket."

Michael paused and slowly filled a second pipe. The father remained silent, his head resting on his trembling hand. He was staring into vacancy, seeing through his half-shut eyes a myriad of changing pictures.

"Michael," he said, "have you ever thought how it will be with our people?"

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"Oh, the Kanakas!" said the lay brother.

"Yes, the Samoans," said Father Studby. "What is to become of them, Michael?"

"They will go," said the young man, coolly, "where the inferior race always goes in a gold rush. They will go to the devil."

"Oh, Michael," exclaimed the priest, "I cannot bear to think of them!"

"I am sure I am sorry, too," said the lay brother. "But there is no use blinking our eyes to facts, or feeling miserable about what can't be helped. The men must learn to work like other people, and I look to you, with your influence here, to line them up on the right side. Fifty or sixty of them would be worth everything to us at the start. As for the nigger women, if they are young and pretty, I dare say a use can be found for them, too. I am sorry, but what can you do? You can't put back the clock, old fellow."

The priest groaned.

"I wish you had never found the gold!" he cried out passionately.

"Well, it is too late now," said Michael.

The next day the old man was up at the first peep of dawn. He had not slept all night, but had lain with open eyes, in a fever of horror and remorse. He walked down to the village and along the sandy beach, and sat miserably for an hour on the bottom of an upturned canoe. One by one, he saw the beehive houses awaken; he saw the *polas* rise, disclosing dark interiors and smoking lamps; he heard the *pâté*, that

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most primitive of human signals, rousing the sluggards to another day, its insistent tapping the prelude to the morning prayer which rose here and there as each household assembled its members. Grave old chiefs appeared at the caves, yawned, gazed at the sun, and exchanged ceremonious greetings; children trooped out sleepily to play; half-grown girls tripped away for water, or sat on logs or strips of matting, in twos and threes, staring out to sea. An imperious old chief began to blow a conch-shell bigger than his head. Bu, bu, bu! it sounded, rich and mellow, with faint reëchoings on the woody hills. The young men assembled about him, laughing and shouting, and taking up the note of the conch in a lusty chorus as they called out the names of those still to come. The father remembered that they were to launch the new *alia*, the huge double canoe, which belonged in common to all Lau'i'i.

He looked about him mournfully; he felt himself a traitor through and through; he dropped his eyes as every one saluted him and the little children ran up to kiss his hands. He was about to sweep this all away, this life of simplicity, peace, and beauty; he was going to enslave these stalwart men; he was going to give these women to degradation. Under the scorching breath of what was called civilisation they would wither and die. God help them! On the ground where those houses now stood there would rise the brick banks and churches of which Michael had spoken; offices, stock exchanges, theatres, and roaring bars; dance-halls full of shameless women, and dens where

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men would be drugged and robbed. And what was he to gain for it all? What was the price for so much sin and misery? Wealth for his Order! The biggest account in that brick bank, blocks of bonds and shares, sheafs of mortgages! Good God, how had he dared set his hand to such an infamy! And if, by way of penance, he were to build a church, the great church of which he had dreamed, with lofty windows of stained glass, and an organ that would shake the very ground, and bells tempered with hundredweights of silver, who, indeed, would there be left to worship in it? What had gold-seekers to do with Christ, with God, with the Blessed Virgin? There might appear, perhaps, a few brown faces, changed and heartbroken, a few shrinking figures in the rags of the disinherited, who would appeal to him for comfort in their extremity. Ah, how could he look at them, these that he had wronged?

Mercy of God, let the accursed gold lie undug!

In an agony of self-denunciation, he walked hither and thither, without looking, without caring where he went, treading the phantom streets of that city of his dreams. He talked aloud and gesticulated to himself; he knelt at the foot of a palm and prayed; he was overwhelmed by his own powerlessness in the face of that impending calamity. He could see no help, he could find no solace. And yet, all the while he felt, with an intense conviction that belied the supplicating words on his lips, that it lay with him, and him alone, to save his people. Thus writhing in the coil of his perplexities, despairing and half mad at the unavert-

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ible ruin he knew no way to avoid, he suddenly found himself at his own door, confronting the man who had brought them all to such a pass.

"My word, father!" cried Michael, "you don't look fit for another day up there. Why, if you could see your face in the glass it would give you the shakes; you ought to be in bed."

He would have passed on, but the priest caught him by the arm.

"Michael," he broke out, "Michael, stop and listen to me. I have something important to tell you—something that must be said, however little you may like to hear it. I—I find I cannot permit this to go any further."

The lay brother stopped short.

"You cannot permit what?" he demanded.

"This digging of gold," cried the priest; "this crime we have in mind against these people, this crime against ourselves. Do you count our vows for nothing, our holy vocation, the fact that God has set us apart to guard the flocks he has confided to us? Fall on your knees, miserable boy, and beg His pardon for your impiety—here, even as I have done; down, down with you!" The old priest's voice rose to a scream; he wound his skinny arms round his companion, and calling on the saints for help, tried to force him to the earth.

The lay brother grew suddenly pale, and, with a violent movement, shook himself free.

"You old fool!" he exclaimed. "Keep your dirty hands off me, I tell you. Leave me alone."

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"I forbid you to take another step," cried the priest. "In the name of God I forbid you."

"See here," said Michael, somewhat recovering himself, "I don't want to quarrel with you. I would rather cut off my right hand than quarrel with you. I need you; and if you only had the sense to see it, you would know that you need me. It would be a rotten business if we ruined each other."

"Why can't you take the gold you have, and go?" exclaimed the father. "Leave the island and content yourself that you have got a competence. It is more already than you could have gained by a lifetime of honest work."

"I mean to stay just where I am," returned the lay brother, "regardless of whether you like it or don't like it; I mean to stand by all my rights, with you if I can, without you if I must. You can do me lots of harm, and skim no end of cream off my milk; though I don't think you have much to gain by doing it, or that the niggers you are so fond of will be greatly benefited. You have every reason to stand in with me, both for your sake and theirs; and if the money cuts no figure with you, you can surely see the sense of having some say in the subsequent developments. That's all I have time for now, though if you are more in your right mind by evening I won't mind talking it over with you again."

With that last word Michael passed on, with an air of assurance implying that all would come right. The old priest remained standing in the path, sullenly looking after him; and he remained long in that

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attitude, even after the brother's black figure had dwindled and disappeared into the distance. He felt utterly baffled, utterly conquered; he wondered whether he had any more resistance in him; he asked himself if God had forsaken him.

What was there now left for him to do, helpless and despairing as he was, but to wait with what patience he might for the concluding tragedy? After all, his own soul was clean; except for the one day, when, in the exultation of the discovery, in the madness that had temporarily possessed him, he had soiled his hands with the accursed thing. He remembered, with self-disdain, how he had accepted the partnership held out to him; how he had been dazzled, cajoled, swept altogether off his feet by the importunity of the devil. But that was all done with now. He would have none of the blood-money; if the knell had sounded for his people, he at least would not profit by their ruin, he at least would not transmute their agony into gold. The others could do that; Michael and his white savages; the hosts that were to come. Had the young man no conscience, no compassion? Was he simply a wall of selfishness, against which one might beat in vain? Oh, the hypocrite, the months he had lived a lie! Oh, the remorseless devil and his gold! How could God endure such things? A man like that ought to be struck down by thunderbolts; people ought to kill him like a mad dog.

The thought made him tremble. If Michael were dead, who would ever know about the gold? Had it not lain there all these years, latently evil in the earth,

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no one dreaming of its existence? Why should it not continue to lie for ever, powerless for all mischief, or until such a time, perhaps, when men would no longer count it a thing of price; when it would be relegated to museums for the curious to stare at, side by side with the wampum of Indians, cowry-shells, and the white beards that pass for money in the Marquesas. Ah, were it not for Michael!

His hands shook and he began to pant for breath. Were it not better that one should suffer than the many? one rather than a thousand? one rather than a whole race, with countless generations yet unborn? He looked down on the roofs of the village, a sight endeared to him by the recollections of so many years; he saw, in the brilliant sunshine, amid the houses that had sheltered them in life, the mossy tombs he knew so well. There, under the shadow, lay Soalu, his first friend; there, the black-browed Puluaoao, the heathen, the libertine, who had first thwarted and then had loved him; there, the earth that covered Lala'ai, in whose bright eyes he had looked once and never dared to look again, whose memory was still as sweet to him as on the day she died; there lay To, the silver-tongued; Silei, the poet; Lapongi, the *muaau*, with a dozen bullets through his headless corpse; Faamuina, Tupua, Sisimaile—how many there were! He had loved those honest hearts now mouldering in the grave; to some he had given messages to carry beyond the unknown river to those dark comrades who had already gone. He loved their children, now men and women, who had been held out to him

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by dying arms, and whom he had led crying from the house of bereavement to comfort as best he could. For nigh twenty years he had been the ruler and law-giver of the bay, the trusted adviser of great chiefs, the faithful priest, the ever-welcome friend. Should he desert his people now?

He went into the cook-house, where Ngalo was sitting on the steps playing hymns on his mouth-organ.

"Ngalo," he said, "I want your rifle and some cartridges."

The boy looked up at his master's face with astonishment,—the ways of whites were past all understanding,—and it was not until he was asked a second time that he rose and sought his gun.

The priest tried to say something by way of explanation, but the words would not come. He could do nothing but take the gun in silence, and charge the magazine with an unsteady hand, while the boy's eyes grew bigger and bigger.

"Doubtless your Excellency has seen a wild cow in the bush?" Ngalo at length inquired.

The father nodded and turned to go.

"Blessed be the hunting!" cried the boy after him from the door, before resuming the strains of "There 's a land that is fairer than day."

"Blessed be the home-stayers," returned the priest, with conventional politeness.

At last he was at the place—at the foot of the second ladder, on the narrow ledge that overlooked the

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third. He scarcely knew why he had been led to choose this spot, for the top would surely have done as well. But the ladder there was shorter, and a desperate man might let himself drop below, or rush up like lightning before one could pull a second trigger. The third ladder was immensely long; Michael himself had once said that it was sixty feet or more; in the middle of it a man was helpless. If he fell it would be to smash to pieces on the rocks beneath; if he elected to climb, it would be in the face of a dozen bullets.

He threw himself on the ground, and sat cross-legged, with the rifle resting in his lap. He was haunted by a dread that the lay brother might still outwit him; that he might burst on him from behind with a mocking laugh; or dart up unexpectedly from the very edge of the cliff. He wondered how Michael would look with a bullet through his face. He remembered such a wound in the Talavao war, when he had helped to bury the killed; and the thought of it made him shudder. He tried to pray, but the words froze on his lips. What had a murderer to do with prayer? But he was not yet a murderer—not yet. There was still time to draw back; there was still time to save his soul from everlasting hell. How dared he hesitate when all eternity was at stake? He was shocked at himself, at his own resolution, at his own courage and steadfastness. He meant to kill the lay brother, even if the skies were to fall. He was there to make a sublime sacrifice for the sake of those he loved. Let hell do its worst. He would say between the torments: "I

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saved them! I saved them!" His only dread was that his hand might tremble on the trigger; that at the supreme moment he might flinch and fail; that he might throw his weapon from him in uncontrollable horror.

Hark! what was that? Mercy of God, what was that?

He peeped stealthily over the edge.

Michael was standing at the foot of the ladder.

The priest felt a sudden sinking in the region of the stomach. Something seemed to say to him: "But that 's flesh and blood; that 's a *man*!" He would have given worlds to have dispossessed himself of the rifle; lies and explanations crowded to his lips; his teeth chattered in his head. Then, as he cowered impotently to the ground, the ladder shook with the weight of Michael's feet on the lowest rung.

He tried to pull himself together; but under the stress of that overwhelming agitation the mechanical part of him seemed to stop. He had to tell himself to breathe; his heart suffocated within his breast. He gasped like a drowning man, drawing in the air with great, tremulous sighs as his choking throat relaxed. Suddenly he ceased altogether to be himself; he became a phantom in a dream; a twitching, crazy creature whom he saw through a sort of mist, dizzily centred in a whirl of forest and sky.

He looked over and saw that Michael was more than half-way up. The lay brother's whole body spoke of dejection and fatigue, of a long day's work not yet ended, and it was evident that the heavy

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can slung from his neck was for once more of a burden than a satisfaction. He raised his weary eyes, and with a kind of a shock encountered those of Father Studby peering down at him from above. He cried out inarticulately, and began to redouble his exertions, smiling and panting as he did so.

Still as in a dream, the priest leaned boldly over the precipice, and dropped the point of his rifle until its farther sight was dancing across the lay brother's face, which, in swift gradations, underwent the whole gamut of dismay, astonishment, and utter stupefaction. For an instant Michael faltered and hung back; he even slunk down a step, speechless and as white as death. Then, of a sudden, he broke out into shrill peals of laughter, followed by a torrent of gabble, brisk, friendly, and tremblingly insincere, such as one might address to a madman from whom it is dangerous to run. He had struck a new place, he cried. My word! there was no end to it—pockets upon pockets only waiting to be washed out. It was at the fifth waterfall, not far from the dam by the banyan-tree, and he had worked there all day with extraordinary success. The other place was good enough, to be sure, with its average of three pounds and more, but this at the fifth waterfall was the real McKay. The father must positively come down and see it at once; positively you could see the nuggets shining in every spadeful; no matter if it were late, the father must come. He had better leave his gun on the top, for who was there to touch it?

Father Studby never turned from his position, nor

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made the least pretence of answering the breathless patter with which the brother tried to shield himself. Like a rock he waited, while the miserable man below him, sweating with fear, moved slowly into point-blank range. Talk as he might, with a volubility that grew increasingly anxious and incoherent, Michael realised at last that his time had come. He stopped ; he raised his hand convulsively ; he cried out in a broken voice : " Oh, for God's sake, don't kill me ! "

Even as he did so, the father pulled the trigger.

Then he turned, reclimbed the ladders, and went home.

That night the priest went outside the reef in his canoe, and emptied Michael's store of gold-dust into the sea, scattering it like seed on the ocean floor at a point where the tide ran swiftest. On his return, with a cunning that seemed to him the inspiration of the devil, he got out the lay brother's spare hat and some of the clothes that were in his chest, and left them, to tell their own tale, on the sandy beach. At dawn he made his way back to the valley, still sustained, in spite of all his fatigue, by a consuming fire of activity. He felt that the sands of his own life were running out ; that at any moment he might be struck down himself by an unseen hand ; that those strange, benumbing premonitions in his brain bade him imperiously to close the chapter of his crime. The horror of dying with his purpose unfulfilled spurred him on to desperate exertions. He stumbled again and again on the path ; he had recurring fits of giddiness, when

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the sun seemed darkened to his eyes, when for a space he half forgot his dreadful errand, and wondered to find himself in the bush. He expected, when he reached the brink of the cliff and began to descend the long, shaky ladders, to feel some recrudescence of the emotions of the day before. But, to his own surprise, he discovered in himself a callousness that set all such qualms at defiance ; he had exhausted, in the course of those last forty hours, all his capacity for such paralysing susceptibilities ; like some soldier after the battle, he was sated with the horrors through which he had passed, and had become altogether deadened to those about him. Even when he stood on the very place from which Michael had made his last appeal, and, looking in the air above, more than half expected to see the protruding muzzle of another rifle, he felt, indeed, no answering thrill or perturbation. The burden of his own fatigue seemed of greater moment than this reliving of a tragedy ; and the thought of how much there was for him still to do moved him infinitely more.

At the foot of the ladder, shrunken and disordered, the corpse of the dead brother lay tumbled in the grass like a sack. With his face upturned to the sky, his sightless eyes, filming with corruption, his tangled hair in a slime of blood and dirt, he opposed a ghastly barrier to the old priest's further progress ; and seemed, even in death itself, to continue to resist and defy him. But the father had passed the stage when such a sight could turn him back, though he faltered for a moment in the throes of an unconquerable dis-

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gust before daring at last to set his foot across the body. Even when he did so, driving off the swarming flies with both his hands, it was with an agony of precaution against the least contact with that dead flesh.

Descending into the valley, he drew together all the tell-tale evidences of their work below, the cradles, picks, and shovels, the tins and boxes and ends of boards and scantlings, which had been carried, at one time and another, into that secluded place, and buried them in one of the deepest holes along the stream. He broke down the dams that Michael had spent days in building, the stones that had been piled aside to uncover the ground of some new pocket, the rough shelters he had raised here and there against the sun; he obliterated with his knife the marks that had been blazed upon the trees, and searched everywhere, with a feverish pertinacity that took him again and again over the same ground, for the least detail that he might have overlooked.

Then, in a drip of sweat, and exhausted to such a pitch that he wondered whether he should ever leave the valley alive, he took the spade he had kept by him to the last, and mounted the bottom ladder. As he went he cut away the lashings that bound it to the rock, and from the top sent it headlong behind him. In the same manner, resting painfully at each stopping-place, he detached the second ladder and the third, arriving once more at the wide shelf where he had meant to dig the grave. But his little strength suddenly forsook him; he was overcome by a deadly nausea; he could hardly stand, much less dig. He

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cast the spade into a thicket, and with unflinching resolution detached the can of gold-dust from the dead man's neck. That, at least, should not remain to tell its tale, and he let the stuff dribble through his fingers over the cliff.

To do more was impossible. His only thought now was to escape; to climb up into the fresher air above; to save himself while there was yet time. That unmoving, silent thing in the grass, obscurely dissolving into decay, must perforce be left as it was, to bear its horrible witness against him. The declining margin of his strength filled him with a frenzy of fear that if he waited overlong he might wait for ever. Between the two risks, the one of a possible detection, the other of a doom unspeakable, he did not venture to pause. He felt, indeed, an extraordinary sense of relief as he began, rung by rung, to rise above the narrow ledge; and with relief a strange fatalism, in which it seemed to him that everything had been predestined from the beginning of the world. As he clung to the ladder, overcome at times by spells of faintness which he knew might bring him to the point of letting go his hold, he was always sustained by the thought that the issue lay with destiny. He would live, or he would fall, as it had been written.

In this singular humour, in which all human responsibility for good or evil seemed to count for nothing, the priest continued to mount the steep face of the cliff. He rested at every second step; he struggled against the recurring fits of giddiness that threatened to dash him from his perch; he fought his way up

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inch by inch, wondering all the time with a grim composure whether or not he was ever destined to reach the top. When at last he drew himself into a coign of safety and sent the great ladder crashing in his wake, when at last he put his foot on the final goal and lay down beneath the trees, then it was that he began to realise the perils to which he had so nearly succumbed, and to quake with a thousand belated apprehensions.

For an hour he remained huddled in the grass, starting at every sound, and altogether daunted by the thought of returning to the village. How would he dare encounter those familiar faces, take up the threads of the old familiar life, endure those awful days to come when the mystery of Michael's disappearance would be in every mouth? Could he trust himself to simulate the concern he was bound to show, the surprise, the alarm, the increasing astonishment and horror as the days passed and there would be still no news of the missing man? Ah, could he trust himself? Had he in him the power to live such a lie, to go as usual about his duties, to hear the confessions of others when his own tortured heart was so dark with guilt?

When, with faltering steps, he at length reached the village, it was to find the whole place in a tumult. Every canoe was afloat; a couple of whale-boats were scouring the outer bay; and the *malae*, usually so deserted on a hot afternoon, was overrun by an excited throng. Had he not, then, heard the news?

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It was thought that the Helper had been drowned that morning, and the boats were now searching for his body! Behold, here were the unfortunate's clothes, found even as they were, and by order of the chief left untouched for the priest himself to see; here, too, was old Lefao, the shrill mother of Pa'a, who had seen the young man go in to his death, and had heard his sinking cry. "Lefao, make for his Excellency a repetition of that mournful sound, and show how he cast up his arms as thou watchedst him from the beach." The old impostor was enjoying all the importance of having such a tale to tell, and the father winced under a pang of shame as he listened to this unexpected confederate.

It was afterwards thought that the sad affair must have unhinged Father Studby's mind, for he subsequently began to show symptoms of serious mental disturbance, which culminated a few months later in his tragic suicide. A marble pillar, the outcome of a public subscription in Sydney, was raised to the memory of these two martyrs of the cross. In faded letters, beneath their crumbling names, one can still spell out the lies:

IN LIFE THEY WERE TOGETHER;
IN DEATH THEY WERE NOT DIVIDED.



AMATUA'S SAILOR



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A MATUA was running down a beautifully shaded road as fast as his little legs would carry him, and close in chase, like a hawk after a sparrow, was a grizzled man-of-war's-man with a switch. The road was long and straight; on both sides it was bordered by prickly hedges bright with limes, and as impenetrable as a tangle of barbed wire. At every step the white man gained on the boy, until the latter could hear the hoarse, angry breath of his pursuer. Amatua stopped short, and before he could even so much as turn he found himself in a grip of iron. Whish, whish, whish! dashed the switch on his bare back and legs, keen and stinging like the bite of fire-ants. It took all the little fellow's manliness to keep him from bellowing aloud. The tears sprang to his eyes,—even the son of a chief is human like the rest of us,—but he would not cry.

“What 's all this?” rang out a voice, as a white man reined in his horse beside them—a tall man in spectacles, who spoke with an air of authority.

The sailor touched his hat. “Why, sir, you 'd scarcely believe it,” he said, “the fuss I 've had with this young savage! First he tried to lose me in the woods. I did n't think nothing of that; but when he got me into a river for a swim, and then made off

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with my clothes, and hid 'em under a tree—I might have been looking for 'em yet, me that must be aboard my ship at twelve o'clock. Why, it might have cost me my stripe! I tell you, I never dreamed of such a thing, for me and Am have been friends ever since the first day I came ashore. He's no better than a treacherous little what-d'ye-call-'em!"

"The chief says thou hidst his clothes," said the stranger, in the native language. "He says thou triedst to lose him in the woods."

"Ask him if I have n't always been a good friend to him," said the sailor. "Ask him who gave him the knife with the lanyard, and who made him the little spear to jug fish on the reef. Just you ask him that, sir."

"Your Highness," said Amatua, in his own tongue, "Bill does n't understand. I love Bill, and I don't want him to drown. I want to save Bill's high-chief life."

"And so thou hidst Bill's clothes," said the stranger. "That was a fine way to help him!"

"Be not angry," said Amatua. "Great is the wisdom of white chiefs in innumerable things, but there are some little, common, worthless things that they don't understand at all."

"Tell him I'm a leading seaman, sir," went on Bill, who of course understood not a word of what Amatua was saying, and whose red, tired face still showed his indignation.

"The old women say that a great evil is about to befall us," said Amatua, gravely, entirely disregarding

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Bill. "Everybody is talking of it, your Highness, even the wise minister from Malua College, Toalua, whose wisdom is like that of Solomon. There 's to be a storm from the north—a storm that will break the ships into ten thousand pieces, and line the beach with dead. Last night I could not sleep for thinking of Bill. Then I said to myself, 'I will lose Bill for two days in the woods, and then he won't be drowned at all.' But Bill is wise, and made the sun guide him back to the right road. Then I made Bill bathe, and tried to steal his clothes. But Bill looked and looked and looked, and when he found them he thought I was a very bad boy."

The stranger laughed, and translated all this long explanation to Bill.

"Goodness gracious!" said Bill. "Do you mean that the kid believes this fool superstition, and was trying to save me from the wreck?"

"That 's it," said the stranger. "I 've known Amatua for a long time, and I think he 's a pretty square boy."

"Why, bless his little heart," said the sailor, catching up the boy in his arms, "I might have known he could n't mean no harm! I tell you, we've been like father and son, me and Am has, up to this little picnic. But just you say to him, sir, that, storm or no storm, Bill's place is the post of duty, and that he 'd rather die there than live to be disgraced."

But the white man had other work to do than translating for Bill and Amatua. He rode off and left them to trudge along on foot. Half an hour later

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they reached the beach, and saw the ships-of-war tugging heavily at their anchors. The weather looked dark and threatening, and a leaden surf was pounding the outer reefs. It appeared no easy matter to get Bill into the boat that was awaiting him, for she was full of men bound for the ship, and difficult to manage in the ebb and sweep of the seas. Bill's face grew stern as he stared before him. He walked to the end of the wharf, and took a long, hawk-like look to seaward, never heeding the shaking woodwork nor the breakers that wet him to the knees. There was something ominous to Amatua in the sight of those deep-rolling ships and the piercing brightness of their ensigns and signal-flags. He was troubled, too, to see Bill so reckless in wetting his beautiful blue trousers and reducing his sliding feet, as the natives call shoes, his lovely patent-leather, silk-laced *se'evae*, to a state of pulp. He tried to draw him back, and pointed to the shoes as a receding wave left them once more to view. But Bill only laughed,—not one of his big hearty laughs, but the ghost of a laugh,—and a queer look came into his blue eyes. He walked slowly back to the boat, which was still rising and falling beside the wharf with its load of silent men. Suddenly he ran his hand into his pocket, and almost before Amatua could realise what it all meant, he felt Bill's watch in his hand, and a round heavy thing that was unmistakably a dollar, and something soft and silken that could be nothing else than the sailor's precious handkerchief. A second later Bill was in the boat, the tiller under his arm, while a dozen backs bent to drive him

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seaward. Amatua stood on the wharf and cried. He forgot the watch and the dollar and the silk handkerchief; he thought only of Bill,—his friend Bill,—the proud chief who would rather die at his post than find a coward's place on shore. "Come back, Bill," he cried, as he ran out to the end of the wharf, never caring for the waves that were dashing higher and higher. But the boat held on her course, dipping into the seas or rising like a storm-bird on some cresting comber until she vanished at last behind the towering *Trenton*.

Amatua did not sob for long. He was a practical boy, and knew that it could not help Bill,—poor Bill!—who already had all the salt water he cared about. So Amatua made his way back to land, and sought out a quiet spot where he could look at his new treasure and calculate on the most profitable way of spending his dollar. You could not say that the dollar burned a hole in his pocket, for Amatua did not use pockets, and his only clothes consisted of a little strip of very dingy cotton; but he was just as anxious to spend it as an American boy with ten pockets. First he looked at the watch. It was a lovely watch. It was none of your puny watches such as white ladies wear, but a thumping big chief of a watch, thick and heavy, with a tick like a missionary clock. It was of shining silver, and the back of it was all engraved and carved with ships and dolphins. Bill had shown it to him a hundred times when they had strolled about the town, or had gone, hand in hand, in search of many a pleasant adventure. It brought the tears to

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Amatua's eyes to recall it all, and he pushed the watch aside to have a look at the handkerchief. This was another old friend. It was of the softest, thickest silk, such as girls delight in, all red and green and blue and yellow, like the colours of a rainbow.

There was nothing small about Bill. Even the dollar seemed bigger and fatter than any Amatua had seen; but then it must be remembered that dollars had seldom come his way. Oh, that dollar! How was he to spend it so that it would reach as far as two dollars?—a financial problem every one has had to grapple with at some time or another.

He was well up in the price of hardtack. The price fluctuated in Apia—all the way from twelve for a quarter up to eighteen for a quarter. Quality did not count; at any rate, Amatua was not one of those boys who mind a little mustiness in their hardtack, or that slight suspicion of rancid whale-oil which is a characteristic of the cheaper article. Hardtack was hardtack, and eighteen were better than twelve. Here was one quarter gone, and hardtack made way for soap. Yes, he must have soap. Even yesterday old Lu'au had said: "War is a terrible thing. It makes one's heart shake like a little mouse in one's body. But lack of soap is worse than war. You can get used to war; but who ever got used to going without soap?" Yes, there must be soap to gladden old Lu'au. This meant another quarter.

As to the third purchase there could be no manner of doubt; some *'ava*, the white, dry root which, pounded in water and strained by the dexterous use

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of a wisp of fibre, supplies the Samoan for the lack of every comfort. Oh, how the 'ava would rejoice his father in those dismal woods, where he lay with the famishing army, bearing hunger, cold, and misery with uncomplaining fortitude. And it should be none of that dusty, spotted stuff that so many traders sell to unknowing whites, or natives in a hurry, but the white 'ava from Vaea, which grows the very finest in the South Seas. And the last quarter? How was that to go? Was it to be a new *lava lava*, or a white singlet, or two rusty cans of salmon, or some barrel beef? Amatua would have dearly loved some marbles; but in the depressed state of the family's finances these were not to be thought of. The beef was the thing; the strong, rank beef that comes in barrels; you could get a slab of it for a quarter, and Latapie, the French trader, would give you a box of matches besides, or a few fish-hooks, for every quarter you spent at his store.

Having finished his calculations, Amatua started off to do his shopping. Even in the short time he had spent in the corner of the ruined church the sea had noticeably risen and was now thundering along the beach, while on the reefs a gleaming spray hung above the breakers like a mist. The stormy sky was splashed with ragged clouds and streaked with flying scud. At their moorings the seven ships rolled under until they seemed to drown the very muzzles of their guns; and the inky vapour that oozed from their funnels, and the incessant shrill shrieking of the boat-swains' whistles, all told a tale of brisk and anxious

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preparation. "Oh, poor Bill!" thought Amatua, and looked away. The wharf from which he had seen the last of his friend was already a wreck, nothing showing of it but the jagged stumps as the seas rolled back.

Two boys told him that a boat of Misi Moa's had been smashed to pieces, and that a big whaler from Lufilufi that pulled fifty oars had shared the same fate. Knots of white traders stood gazing solemnly out to sea; the provost guards from the ships were ransacking the town for the few men they still missed, and they were told to hurry or their boats would never live to carry them back. There was a general air of apprehension and excitement; people were nailing up their windows and drawing in their boats before the encroaching ocean; and the impressiveness of the situation was not a little heightened by the heavy guard of blue-jackets lined up before the German consulate, and the throngs of Tamasese's warriors that swarmed everywhere about, fierce of mien in that unfriendly town, with their faces blackened for war, and their hands encumbered with rifles and head-knives. But Amatua had no time to think of such things; the signs of war were familiar to him, and the armed and overbearing adversaries of his tribe and people were no longer so terrible as they once had been.

The increasing roar of the sea and the wild sky that spoke of the impending gale kept the thought of Bill close to his heart, and he went about his business with none of the pleasure that the spending

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of money once involved. Not that he forgot his prudence or his skill at bargaining in the anxiety for Bill that tore his little heart. By dint of walking and chaffering, he came off with twenty hardtack for his first quarter; with the soap he extorted a package of starch; and after he had sniffed beef all the way from Sogi to Vaiala,—a distance of two miles,—he became the proprietor of a hunk at least six ounces heavier than the ruling price allowed. The 'ava was of a superb quality, fit for a king to drink.

It was late when Amatua got home and crept into the great beehive of a house that had been the pride of his father's heart. The girls shouted as they saw him, and old Lu'au clapped her hands as her quick eyes perceived the soap. His mother alone looked sad—his poor mother, who used to be so gay and full of fun in that happy time before the war. She had never been the same since her cousin, the divinity student, had brought back her brother's head from the battle-field of Luatuanuu—that terrible battle-field where the best blood of Samoa was poured out like water.

She looked anxiously at Amatua's parcels, and motioned him to her side, asking him in a low voice how and where he had got them.

"It was this way," said Amatua. "Bill and I are brothers. What is mine is Bill's; what is Bill's is mine. We are two, but in heart we are one. That's how I understand Bill, though he talks only the white man's stutter. 'Amatua,' he said, just before he got into the boat,—I mean what he said in his heart, for

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there was not time for words,—‘we are all of us in God’s high-chief hands this day; a storm is coming, and my place is on my ship, where I shall live or be cast away, as God wills. Take you this dollar and spend it with care for the comfort of all our family; take my very valuable watch, that ticks louder than a missionary clock, and my handkerchief of silk, the like of which there is not in Samoa, and keep them for me. My life is God’s alone, but these things belong to all of our family. Stand firm in the love of God, and strengthen your heart to obey his high-chief will.’”

It was late when Amatua awoke. The house was empty save for old Lu’au, who was kindling a fire on the hearth. A strange uproar filled the air, the like of which Amatua had never heard before—the tramp of multitudes as they rushed and shouted, deafening explosions, and the shrill, high scream of the long-expected gale. Amatua leaped from his mats, girded up his loin-cloth, and ran headlong into the night. It was piercing cold, and he shivered like a leaf, but he took thought of nothing. He ran for the beach, which lay at no great distance from his father’s house, and was soon panting down the lane beside Mr. Eldridge’s store. It was flaming with lights and filled with a buzzing crowd of whites and natives; and on the front verandah there lay the dripping body of a sailor with a towel over his upturned face. The beach was jammed with people, and above the fury of the gale and the roaring breakers which threatened to engulf the very town there rang out the penetrating voices of the

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old war chiefs as they vociferated their orders and formed up their men. Even as Amatua stood dazed and almost crushed in the mob, there was a sudden roar, a rush of feet, and a narrow lane opened to a dozen powerful men springing through with the bodies of two sailors.

Amatua turned and fought his way seaward, boring through the crowd to where the seas swept up to his ankles, and he could make out the lights of the men-of-war. There was a ship on the reef; he could see the stupendous tangle of her yards and rigging; every wave swept in some of her perishing crew. The undertow ran out like a mill-race; living men were tossed up the beach like corks, only to be sucked back again to destruction. The Samoans were working with desperation to save the seamen's lives, and more than one daring rescuer was himself swept into the breakers.

Amatua found himself beside a man who had just been relieved, and was thunderstruck to find that it was no other than Oa, an old friend of his, who had been in the forest with Mataafa.

"How do you happen here, Chief Oa?" shouted Amatua.

"The Tamaseses have retired on Mulinuu," said Oa. "It is Mataafa's order that we come and save what lives we can."

"Germans, too?" asked Amatua, doubtfully, never forgetful of his father's wound, or of his uncle who fell at Luatuanuu.

"We are not at war with God," said the chief.

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sternly. "To-night there is peace in every man's heart."

Amatua stood long beside his friend, peering into that great void in which so many men were giving up their lives. Sometimes he could make out the dim hulls of ships when they loomed against the sky-line or as the heavens brightened for an instant. Bodies kept constantly washing in, nearly all of them Germans, as Amatua could tell by their uniforms, or, if these were torn from them in the merciless waters, by the prevalence of yellow hair and fair skins. Amatua shrank from the sight of these limp figures, and it was only his love for Bill that kept him on the watch. Poor Bill! How had he fared this night? Was he even now tumbling in the mighty rollers, his last duty done on this sorrowful earth, his brave heart still for ever? Or did he lie, as so many lay that night here and there about the town, wrapped in blankets in some white man's house or native chief's, safe and sound, beside a blazing fire?

Amatua at last grew tired of waiting there beside Oa. The cold ate into his very bones, and the crowd pressed and trampled on him without ceasing. He cared for nothing so long as he thought he might find Bill; but he now despaired of that and began to think of his tired little self. He forced his way back, and moved aimlessly along from house to house, looking in at the lighted windows in the vain hope of seeing Bill. Of dead men there were plenty, but he could not bear to look at them too closely. He was worn out by the horror and excitement he had undergone,

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and when his eyes closed, as they sometimes would, he seemed to see Bill's face dancing before him. He was a very tired boy by the time he made his way home and threw himself once again on the mats in that empty house.

It was a strange sight that met Amatua's gaze the next day on the Apia beach. The wind had fallen, and the mountainous waves of the previous night had given way to a heavy ground-swell. But the ships, the wreckage of ships, the ten thousand and one things—the million and one things—which lined the beach for a distance of two miles! One German man-of-war had gone down with every soul on board; another—the *Adler*—lay broken-backed and sideways on the reef; the *Olga* had been run ashore, and looked none the worse for her adventure. The United States ship *Vandalia* was a total wreck, and half under water; close to her lay the *Trenton*, with her gun-deck awash; and within a pistol-shot of both was the old *Nipsic*, her nose high on land. The British ship, the *Calliope*, was nowhere to be seen, having forced her way to sea in the teeth of the hurricane.

Amatua went almost crazy at the sight of what lay strewn on the beach that morning. He ran hither and thither, picking up one thing and then throwing it away for another he liked better: here an officer's full-dress coat gleaming with gold lace, there a photograph-album in a woful state, some twisted rifles, and a broom; everywhere an extraordinary hotchpotch of things diverse and innumerable. Amatua found an

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elegant sword not a bit the worse for its trip ashore, an officer's gold-laced cap, and a ditty-box, full of pins and needles and sewing-gear and old letters. He would also have carried off a tempting little cannon had it weighed anything under a quarter of a ton; as it was, he covered it with sand, and stood up the broom to mark the place, which, strange to say, he has never been able to find since. He got a cracked bell next, a tin of pork and beans, a bottle of varnish, a one-pound Hotchkiss shell, a big platter, and a German flag! This he thought enough for one load, and made his triumphant way home, where he tried pork and beans for the first time in his life—and did not like them.

It would have fared badly with him, for there was nothing in the house for him to eat save a few green bananas, had it not been for the Samoan pastor next door. The pastor had hauled a hundred-pound barrel of prime mess pork out of the surf, and in the fulness of his heart he was dividing slabs of it among his parishioners. Another neighbour had salvaged eleven cans of biscuit-pulp, which, though a trifle salt, was yet good enough to eat.

In fact, Amatua ate a rather hearty breakfast, and lingered longer over it than perhaps was well for the best interests of his family. By the time he returned to the beach the cream had been skimmed from the milk. True, there was no lack of machinery and old iron, and mountains of tangled rope and other ship's gear; but there was no longer the gorgeous profusion of smaller articles, for ten thousand

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busy hands had been at work since dawn. Amatua searched for an hour, and got nothing but a squashy stamp-album and a musical box in the last stages of dissolution.

He realised regretfully that he could hope for nothing more, and after trading his album to a half-caste boy for a piece of lead, and exchanging the musical box for six marbles, he again bent his energies to the finding of Bill.

For fear of a conflict, the naval commanders had divided their forces. The Germans were encamped at one end of the town, the Americans at the other, and armed sentries paced between. Amatua had never seen so many white men in his life, and he knew scarcely which way to turn first. He was bewildered by the jostling host that encompassed him on every side, by the busy files that were marshalled away to work, the march and countermarch of disciplined feet, the shrill pipe of the boatswains' calls, and the almost ceaseless bugling. He looked long and vainly for Bill in every nook and cranny of the town. He watched beside the *Nipsic* for an hour; he forced the guard-house, and even made his way into the improvised hospital, dodging the doctors and the tired orderlies. But all in vain. He trudged into Savalalo and Songi, where the Germans were gathered, fearing lest Bill might have been thrown into chains by those haughty foemen; but he found nothing but rows of dead, and weary men digging graves. He stopped officers on the street, and kind-faced seamen and marines, and asked them earnestly if they had seen

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Bill. Some paid no attention to him; others laughed and passed on; one man slapped him in the face.

When he came back from the German quarter he found a band playing in front of Mr. Moors's store, and noticed sentries about the place, and important-looking officers, with swords and pistols. He was told that the admiral was up-stairs, and that Mr. Moors's house was now the headquarters of the American forces. A great resolution welled up in Amatua's heart. If there was one man on earth that ought to know about Bill, it was the admiral. Amatua dodged a sentry, and running up the steps, he crept along the verandah, and peeped into the room which Kimberly had exchanged for his sea-swept cabin. The admiral sat at a big table strewn inches high with papers, reports, and charts. He was writing in his shirt-sleeves, and on the chair beside him lay his uniform coat and gold-laced cap. At another table two men were also writing; at another a single man was nibbling a pen as he stared at the paper before him. It reminded Amatua of the pastor's school. Half a dozen officers stood grouped in one corner, whispering to one another, their hands resting on their swords. It was all as quiet as church, and nothing could be heard but the scratch of pens as they raced across the paper. Suddenly a frowning officer noticed Amatua at the door. "Orderly," he cried, "drive away that boy"; and Amatua was ignominiously seized, led down-stairs, and thrown roughly into the street.

Amatua cried as though his little heart would break.

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He sat on the front porch of the house, careless of the swarming folk about him, and took a melancholy pleasure in being jostled and trampled on. Oh, it was a miserable world! Bill was gone, and any one could cuff a little boy. More than one sailor patted his curly head and lifted him in the air and kissed him; but Amatua was too sore to care for such attentions. It was cruel to think that the one man alone in Samoa who knew where to find Bill, the great chief-captain up-stairs, was absolutely beyond his power to reach. This thought was unbearable; he nerved himself to try again; he recalled the admiral's face, which was not unkindly, though sad and stern. After all, nothing worse could befall him than a beating. Again he dodged the lower sentry, and sprang up the stairs like a cat. Again he gazed into that quiet room and listened to the everlasting pens. This time he was discovered in an instant; the orderly pounced at him, but Amatua, with his heart in his mouth, rushed towards the admiral, and threw himself on his knees beside him. The old man put a protecting arm round his neck, and the orderly, foiled in the chase, could do nothing else than salute.

"Anderson," said the admiral to an officer, "it is the second time the boy has been here. I tell you he is after something, and we are not in a position to disregard anything in this extraordinary country. He may have a message from King Mataafa. Send for Moors."

In a few moments that gentleman appeared, and was bidden to ask Amatua what he wanted. The officers

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gathered close behind their chief, and even the assiduous writers looked up.

"What does he want?" demanded the admiral, who had no time to spare.

"He wants to find a sailor named Bill," said Moors. "He's afraid Bill is drowned, and thought he would ask you."

Every one smiled save the admiral. "Are you sure that is all?" he said.

"He says he loved Bill very much," said Moors, "and has searched the beach and the hospital and even the lock-up without finding him. Says he even waited alongside the *Nipsic* for an hour."

"Half my men are named Bill," said Kimberly; "but I fear his Bill is numbered with the rest of our brave fellows who went down last night. Moors," he went on, "take the lad below, and give him any little thing he fancies in the store."

Amatua did not know what might happen next, but he bravely tramped beside Mr. Moors, prepared to face the worst. He felt dizzy and faint when they got below, and Mr. Moors popped him up on the counter, and asked him whether he would prefer candy or some marbles. "The great chief-captain said thou wert a brave boy, and should have a present," said Mr. Moors.

Amatua shook his head. Somehow he had lost interest in such trifles. "Thank his Majesty the admiral," he said, "but an aching heart takes no pleasure in such things. With thy permission I will go out and look again for Bill. Perhaps, if I change

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my mind, I will come back and choose marbles," he added cautiously; and with that he scrambled off the counter and made for the door.

"Oh, Bostock," cried Moors to a naval officer lounging on the front verandah, "if you have nothing better to do, just take this kid along with you. He's crazy to find a sailor named Bill, and he is n't sure but that he was drowned last night. He must be pretty well cut up if he won't take any marbles."

Bostock stopped Amatua, and took his hand in his own. "We'll go find Bill," he said.

Again was the search begun for Bill, along the main street; in the alleys, and through the scattered native settlements behind the town as far as the Uvea huts, at Vaimoso, and the slums of the Nieué Islanders. Bostock let no seaman pass unnoticed; a heavy fatigue-party coming back from work on the wrecks—sixty men and four officers—were lined up at his request, and Amatua was led through the disciplined ranks in search of Bill. Even the *Nipsic* was boarded by the indefatigable Bostock and the weary little boy; and although repairs were being rushed at a tremendous pace, and every one looked overdriven and out of temper, the huge ship was overhauled from top to bottom. From the grimy stoke-hole, where everything dripped oil and the heat was insupportable, to the great maintop where men were busy at the rigging; from the crowded quarters of the seamen to the sodden and salt-smelling mess-room, in which the red came off the cushions like blood, the pair made their way in search of Bill.

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Bostock led the boy back to land, and said good-bye to him at the corner of the Apia Hotel. He tried to raise his spirits, and atone for their failure to find Bill, by the present of a shilling. Amatua accepted it with quiet gratitude, although the gift had not the cheering effect that Bostock desired. The little fellow was sick at heart, and all the shillings in the world could not have consoled him for the loss of Bill. The naval officer followed him with his eyes as he trudged sorrowfully home. He, too, had lost a life-long friend in that awful night.

Amatua gave up all hope of ever seeing Bill again, as time slipped away and one day melted into another. He made friends with Bostock, and spent many a pleasant hour in the company of that jovial officer, following him about everywhere like a dog; but for all that he did not love him as he had loved Bill. Those were exciting times in Apia, and there was much to amuse and distract a little boy. In the day Bill often passed from his thoughts, for the incessant panorama life had now become almost precluded any other thought; but at night, when he awoke in the early hours and heard the cocks calling, then it was that his heart turned to Bill and overflowed with grief for his lost friend.

Two days after the storm—two as men count, but centuries in Amatua's calendar—the British ship *Calliope* returned to port, strained and battered by that terrible hour when she had pitted her engines against the gale and taken her desperate dash for freedom.

But Amatua's little head was far too full of some-

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thing else for him to bother about another man-of-war. Bostock had promised to take him to the raft where men were diving for the *Trenton's* treasure-chest. He knew all about men-of-war by this time, for he had the freedom of the *Nipsic's* ward-room, and he took breakfast regularly with his friends, the officers. They had given him a gold-laced cap and a tin sword, and the tailor had made him a blue jacket with shoulder-straps and brass buttons and the stripes of a second lieutenant. He had his own appointed station when the ship beat to quarters; for the *Nipsic* had been got safely off the reef and once more divided the waters of the bay.

It was a beautiful morning when they pulled out in a shore boat to the raft where the work was in progress. As the Americans possessed no diving apparatus, Kane, the British captain, had lent them the one he carried, with six good men who had some experience in such matters. Amatua was disappointed to find so little to interest him. He examined the pump with which two men were keeping life in the diver below; but he could not understand the sense of it, and the continuous noise soon grew monotonous. Except a tin pail containing the men's lunch, the brass-bound breaker of drinking water, and some old clothes, there was nothing in the world to attract a small boy. Amatua stood beside Bostock and yawned; the little second lieutenant longed to be on shore playing marbles with his friends in civil life. He was half asleep when Bostock plucked his arm and pointed into the depths beneath. A glittering shell-fish of

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ponderous weight and monstrous size was slowly rising to the surface. Every one rushed to the side of the raft, save only the two men at the pumps, who went on unmoved. Amatua clung to Bostock. Higher and higher came the hideous shell-fish, until its great, goggling-eyed head appeared horribly above the water. Amatua turned faint. The crew behaved with incredible daring, and seized the huge, bulging thing with the utmost fearlessness. It was frightful to see it step on the raft and toil painfully to the centre, as though it had been wounded in some mortal part. One of the men lifted a hammer as though to kill it, and began to tap, tap, tap on some weak spot in the neck. Then he threw down the hammer, detached the long suckers which reached from the beast's snout, and started to unscrew its very head from its body. Amatua looked on confounded; he was shaking with horror, yet the fascination of that brassy monster drew him close.

Suddenly the creature sank on its knees, and the man gripped the head in both his hands and lifted it up. And underneath, wonder of wonders! there was the face of a man—a white man.

And the white man was Bill!

With a cry Amatua threw himself into his friend's arms, dripping though he was. What did he care for the fine uniform, now that Bill was found again!

"And where have you been all this time?" asked Bostock.

"Oh, I'm the boatswain's mate of the *Calliope*," said

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Bill; "and what with the knocking about we got, I've been kept hard at it on the rigging."

"You have been badly missed," said Bostock.

"Bless his old heart!" said the sailor, "I think a lot of my little Am."









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